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1924

## The Communist Party of America—1924



### UNSPECIFIED MONTH

**"For the United Front of Labor! A Call to Action by the Workers Party: To All Labor Unions, All Organizations of the Working Farmers, the Farmer-Labor Party, the Socialist Party, the Proletarian Party, the Socialist-Labor Party, and the Industrial Workers of the World. [Early 1924]."** Full text of a four page leaflet produced by the Workers Party of America in an attempt to unite the various political organizations of the American left in a single united front against the "one common enemy—the employing class. Unity is

proposed on the basis a five-pronged program including (1) amalgamation of craft unions into industrial unions; (2) protection of the foreign-born workers; (3) repudiation of the 2nd, 2-and-1/2, and Amsterdam Internationals; (4) recognition of Soviet Russia; and (5) radical restructuring of the constitutional and political structure of the country, including establishment of a Labor Party, easing the standard for amending the US Constitution, elimination of the US Senate, elimination of Presidential veto power, elimination of the Supreme Court and the "veto power of courts over legislation," and eliminating the primacy of state-based law—in short, "the removal of all such Governmental obstacles now hindering the workers in their struggle against the exploiting class." The manifesto declares that "unless the workers organize to meet the new offensive of the employing class they will lose every vestige of their hard-won gains of many years of bitter struggle. They will be completely enslaved by the victorious employing class dictatorship."

1924

### JANUARY

**"An Open Letter to John Fitzpatrick"** by William Z. Foster. This voluminous open letter to progressive head of the Chicago Federation of Labor John Fitzpatrick appeared in the pages of the Labor Herald, organ of William Z. Foster's Trade Union Unity League. Foster attempts to respond to Fitzpatrick's public criticism of the Workers Party of America for having caused a split of the July 1923 convention of the Farmer-Labor Party in Chicago. Foster criticizes Samuel Gompers for having "sabotaged" the 1919 strikes of packinghouse and steel workers — the former by insisting upon turning over the action to inept international unions, the latter by doing nothing at all to further the organizational effort. The failure of the steel strike in particular ended an effort to "revolutionize" the American Federation of Labor, Foster notes, forcing a "a new tack to arrive at the goal of the reorganization and modernization of the trade union movement." This was an organization of left wing union elements into the Trade Union Educational League.

If he had closely participated in a broad left wing movement, Foster declares that Fitzpatrick might "have been developed in spite of yourself into a figure powerful enough to wreck the reactionary bureaucracy." But Fitzpatrick had proven unequal to the task, being as he was "a regular of the regulars," Foster asserts. "You will not break completely with the official family and become an outcast, a disrespective in the movement... You are determined to maintain your official standing in the labor movement, and especially to retain the presidency of the Chicago Federation of Labor. For you every tactical consideration depends upon that." Foster then offers his own interpretation of the July 1923 as illuminated by this burning bridge: continuation on the path towards an independent labor party "would have brought you the bitterest opposition of Gompers and might have cost you your position as head of the Chicago Federation of Labor.... A militant leader would have made the fight. But not you. Reluctant to break squarely with Gompers, you let the movement simmer along. Consequently the Farmer-Labor Party practically died in your hands despite its golden opportunity. It failed in its mission as champion of the labor party idea and soon degenerated into little more than a name."

**"1923 Workers Party of America Official Membership Statistics."** [prepared circa Jan. 1924]A complete month-by -month account of the paid membership of the Workers Party of America expressed in terms of membership of the various language federations of the party as well as by membership district. At the end of 1923 there were 18 language groups of the WPA (ten largest: Finnish, English, South Slavic, Jewish, Lithuanian, Russian, Ukrainian, German, Czechoslovak, Latvian) and 14 Districts (six largest: New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Cleveland, Detroit). Average paid membership for the year was 15,395, of which a massive 42.7% were members of the Finnish language federation. While many members of the various language groups were fluent in English, the membership of the English language groups was just 7.6% of the WPA for 1923.

**Resolution on Shop Nuclei. Adopted by the 3rd Convention of the Workers Party of America, New York City—Dec. 30, 1923 - Jan. 2, 1924.** From 1923 there was movement inside the Communist International to restructure the various national Communist Parties on a model of the victorious Russian Communist Party, which when linked one to another by the Communist International would constitute the "world party." This process of restructuring parties to be based on primary units located in the workplace (so-called "Shop Nuclei") rather than in the geographic areas in which the party members resided was known as "bolshevization." This is the 3rd Convention of the WPA's instruction to its incoming CEC on the question of shop nuclei. The structure is favorable and necessary to the Communist movement, according to the resolution, but "greatly complicated by the fact that our Party is made up of many [17] language sections." The Convention envisioned a parallel structure in which party members would remain members of language branches, through which they would pay dues, while at the same time organizing shop nuclei "wherever two or more party members are employed in the same factory or shop." The details of the connection of these shop nuclei to the existing district organizations and city central committees was explicitly deferred to the incoming CEC, while the Comintern's idea of forming "international branches of workers of various language groups" was respectfully referred back to the CI as a change that would cause serious disruption of the Party organization.

**“Lenin,”** by John Pepper [Circa late January 1924] V.I. Ul’ianov (N. Lenin) died on January 24, 1924, and the nature of politics within the Communist movement was instantly altered. A new word entered the lexicon—“Leninism”—and a mad scramble took place within the leadership of the Russian Communist Party (bolsheviks) to define themselves as the most dedicated adherents of this new -ism and to thus wrap up in the mantle of authority of the departed Soviet leader. This article by Hungarian John Pepper, one of the top-ranking leaders in the Communist Party of America at the time, introduces this new intellectual concept to America—seemingly one of the first uses of the word “Leninism” on the North American continent. What makes this particularly interesting is the verbatim recitation of the definition of Leninism posited by Grigorii Zinoviev: “Leninism is Marxism applied to the present, the final period of capitalism.” Pepper lauds Lenin as “the leader of the world revolution” and “our greatest leader.” In Pepper’s view, Lenin’s contributions to marxism included: (1) the first development of “the centralized Communist Party, the conscious minority which seizes the initiative, but never loses contact with the masses”; (2) discoverer of the central role of state power; (3) discoverer the revolutionary potential of the general strike; (4) first person to recognize the fundamental opportunism of the 2nd International; (5) the first “who saw clearly that the revolution cannot be the achievement of a single class, but that it can succeed” only if in addition to the working class “all other non-capitalist strata are revolutionized” and the capitalist class “is no longer in a position to rule.”

**“The Labor Party Campaign: An Excerpt from the Report of the Central Executive Committee to the Third National Convention of the Workers Party of America,”** by C.E. Ruthenberg. [Jan. 1924] The Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America reviews the organization’s activity for 1923 in the Farmer-Labor Party in this report to the 3rd Convention of the WPA. The failure of the WPA to have its delegates seated at the Dec. 1922 Cleveland Conference of the Conference for Progressive Political Action combined with the FLP’s withdrawal from the CPPA over its failure to launch a new broad-based Labor Party spurred a move by the WPA to join forces with the existing (old) Farmer-Labor Party as its “united front” vehicle for joint political action, according to this account. With announced decision of the Socialist Party and LaFollette Progressive movement not to participate in the forthcoming July 3, 1923, Conference to establish an new “Federated Farmer-Labor Party,” the old FLP began to lose enthusiasm for the gathering, and a split with John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor took place at the gathering. Ruthenberg is critical of the activity of the Chicago district of the WPA in the aftermath and attempts to document this group’s mistakes in contrast to the “correct guidance” of the Political Committee of the CEC of the Workers Party.

**“The Workers Party Convention: Chicago – Dec. 30, 1923 to Jan. 2, 1924,”** by Philip Kerr  
Reformatted edition. First-hand account of the third national convention of the Workers Party written by an activist in the rival Proletarian Party of America. Kerr calls the WPA a “aggregation, permeated...with many contradictions and conflicting views,” with an officialdom intent on casting their activities before the Comintern as a success in order to maintain their jobs. Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg is depicted as the head cheerleader, offering a “glowing eulogy” of the organization’s activities, proclaiming the “dying Trade Union Educational League” to be a “gigantic success.” Kerr charges the WPA with “bungling tactics”

in relation to the July 1923 Farmer-Labor Party convention, the chances of success of which are said to have been destroyed by the Communists' convention-packing activities. Reported memberships of both the Federated Farmer-Labor Party and the TUEL are said to have been grossly inflated by the "common opportunists and tricksters" of the WPA, Kerr charges. Kerr characterizes the dominant Foster-Cannon faction has having "strong syndicalist tendencies," while the Pepper-Ruthenberg faction are called "rank opportunists." A reduction of the size of the governing Central Executive Committee from 28 members to 13 is noted.

**"Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago, January 8, 1924."** This cover letter was written by Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg to ECCI to explain the unseen politics behind the 3rd Convention of the Workers Party of America and the decisions of that gathering. Ruthenberg cites three main areas of division: (1) the policy of the WPA with regards to an anticipated petty bourgeois "Third Party" springing out of the Conference for Progressive Political Action; (2) the United Front policy of the Chicago district—a veiled attack on William Z. Foster by John Pepper; (3) and the composition of the newly elected Central Executive Committee—in which the Foster-Cannon faction in conjunction with the Lore "Anti-Third Party" group attained a decisive majority, defeating the Pepper group. With regards to the new CEC, Ruthenberg notes that the "conflicting forces involved in this election" are "somewhat difficult to present in view of the fact that the issues were those of personality rather than issues of policy." At root was latent antagonism between Foster and Cannon against John Pepper, a holdover from the 1923 debate over "organizing and building up the Federated Farmer-Labor Party as a party," according to Ruthenberg. Ruthenberg depicts himself as holding an intermediate position between the Foster-Cannon and Pepper groups and notes that in the negotiations over the composition of the new CEC at one point Foster proposed a 6-6 division of the CEC with the Pepper group, with Ruthenberg the decisive 13th vote. This proposal was scrapped in favor of a composition that represented "a clear majority on the CEC for the Foster-Cannon-Lore group," Ruthenberg notes.

**The Workers Party of America's Comintern Appropriation Request for 1924.** [Jan. 10, 1924] Text of a coded message to the Comintern sent by Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg shortly after the close of the Third National Convention of the Workers Party of America [Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924]. Ruthenberg asks for \$64,000 for 1924, as follows: Daily Worker, \$25,000 ("It is important that we receive it quickly if daily is to live"); Labor Party campaign, \$10,000; labor unions [TUEL], \$12,500; literature publishing, \$3,500; educational work, \$5,000; agricultural work, \$8,000. This amount, if fully approved and transmitted, would represent a subsidy of \$3.38 per member for an organization of 19,000 dues-paying members. Includes extensive explanatory notes by Tim Davenport.

**"The American Revolutionary Movement Grows: An Analysis of the Many Achievements of the Third National Convention of the Workers Party,"** by C.E. Ruthenberg [Jan. 13, 1924] An upbeat and positive account of the recently completed 3rd Convention of the Workers Party of America [Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924] by the Executive Secretary of the organization (whose faction lost majority control of the incoming Central

Executive Committee to the Foster-Cannon-Lore alliance). Ruthenberg emphasizes the continuity between the past and forthcoming CECs, noting that the Convention voted to approve the policy laid down by the previous CEC. Through its United Front efforts (Foreign-Born Workers, Farmer-Labor Party, Bridgeman Defense) the Party had gained a foothold in the American political culture for the first time, Ruthenberg asserts, while he optimistically adds that the Party had “at last consolidated its forces and that the period of splits and factional struggles was over...” Ruthenberg’s language is measured in this account published in the new Daily Worker, but he does note major controversy over the United Front policy of the Chicago organization (i.e. the Foster group) and John Pepper’s tactical decision to remove the divisive issue of the relationship of the WPA to an anticipated petty bourgeois Third Party in America from the Convention agenda to the Comintern for final decision—thereby smoothing the way with the “15-odd” of the 53 convention delegates loosely affiliated around Ludwig Lore in opposition to any collaboration with such a party. This episode incidentally demonstrates once again the circularity of the American relationship to the CI in this period, in which appeal to outside authority was actively used BY THE AMERICANS to mitigate factional controversy. The Comintern’s organizational model to be implemented by all parties, based on the shop nucleus, is sidestepped, with the convention agreeing to establish shop units in parallel with the current organizational system, based on language branches. “The Convention left to the next National Convention the question of extending this work,” Ruthenberg notes.

**“Letter to All Branches of the Workers Party of America from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary.”** [published Jan. 14, 1924] “State of the Party” -type message by the newly re-elected Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America to the party membership, published in the pages of the Daily Worker. Ruthenberg notes that Sunday, Feb. 3, 1924, is to be a coordinated day of public meetings nationwide, organized around the issue of recognitions of Soviet Russia. Ruthenberg notes other key initiatives for the WPA in the coming year, including continuation of the campaign for protection of foreign-born workers and continued efforts to establish a Federated Farmer-Labor Party. Towards the latter objective, Ruthenberg states that the weekly Chicago party paper, Voice of Labor, had been formally transferred to the FFLP and renamed Farmer-Labor Voice – a precursor to the paper’s termination for budgetary reasons. A membership drive is announced, with Ruthenberg noting that at the time of the 3rd National Convention “the figures gathered showed 25,000 members on our Party rolls, although the dues payments have not reached that amount.” A goal of 10,000 new members is declared.

**“Winitsky Hears of Pardon Action Two Days Later: Gets Copy of Freiheit by Accident.”** (Daily Worker) [Jan. 16, 1924] Short news account in the official English-language daily of the Workers Party of America detailing the “strange manner” in which party leader Harry Winitsky initially learned of his pardon by New York Governor Al Smith. Rather than being directly informed in person, by telegram, or by phone, Winitsky is said to have learned of his full pardon from a published news account in the Yiddish-language Communist daily, the Freiheit. Prior to his May 1922 release from Sing Sing Penitentiary on bond, Winitsky was subject for two years to “the harshest treatment that could be concocted by the Department of Justice Torquemada,” according to this news account. “He was beaten repeatedly and brutally,

threatened with confinement in an insane asylum, and framed on false charges of attempted murder made by an embittered prison warden at the Department of Justice's instigation," the story indicates.

### **Minutes of the WPA Organization Committee and WPA Executive Council, Meetings of January 19, 1924.**

The Organization Committee was a standing subcommittee of the Central Executive Committee of the WPA detailed to handle the specifics of personnel assignments, budgetary planning, and so forth. These are the minutes of the first 1924 session of the "Org Com," at which the Foster faction was to hold majority control over decision-making for the first time. However, one of the three members of the Foster majority, Martin Abern, was absent—resulting in a 2 to 2 deadlock on several personnel matters. This standoff which was broken at the suggestion of Ruthenberg, who advocated the call of a snap session of the Executive Council of the Party for that evening, at which the Foster majority group held a more secure majority. In this way, personnel changes could be made and the party could move forward without Ruthenberg (or Pepper) having to assent to the changes. These moves included: (1) Abram Jakira resigned as Assistant Secretary of the WPA, replaced by James Cannon; (2) *The Daily Worker* campaign was wrapping up and head of that committee John Ballam (scheduled to become DO1 for Boston) was instead named DO4 [Buffalo]; (3) Foster faction loyalist Charles Krumbein was named DO2 [New York City]; (4) Abram Jakira was unanimously named DO3 [Philadelphia]; (5) Martin Abern and Fahle Burman were named to the committee for the Friends of Soviet Russia, prompting Pepper's resignation from the same. In addition, a three person committee consisting of Foster, Abern, and Ruthenberg was named to work towards execution of the shop nuclei decisions of the recently concluded 3rd Convention of the WPA.

**"The Farmers and the American Revolution,** by John Pepper [Jan. 19, 1924] One of John Pepper's most interesting and thoughtful analyses of the state of American agriculture and the Farmer-Labor movement—an exposition of the core of his strategic thinking about contemporary American economic development from the perspective of a revolutionist. Pepper cites the statistics of Secretary of Agriculture Henry Wallace as to the extent of the deep crisis which rocked American agriculture throughout the 1920s: even though the 1923 harvest had been vast, high costs of tariff-protected manufactured goods and other production expenses and low market prices for agricultural commodities had combined to make agricultural profoundly unprofitable. Citing Wallace, Pepper states that about 8.5 percent of grain-belt farmers had already lost their farms to creditors with an additional 15 percent in a technical state of bankruptcy, surviving due to the leniency of creditors. This American agricultural crisis was the flipside of the industrial crisis then wracking Germany and Great Britain, with factories shuttered and millions of workers unemployed due to an inability to sell manufactured goods to an impoverished world. Over "big opposition in our Party" to the idea, Pepper stated that the agricultural crisis was not temporary and that "the most important revolutionary fact" of the January WPA convention was the decision to make a "bold attempt to place ourselves at the head of the farmers' revolt." Pepper analyzes the composition of the American working class and the WPA which mirrors it and concludes that "a revolutionary movement in the United States, which embraces only the foreign-born proletarian workers of the basic industries and only a narrow stratum of the native-born workers, has no real hope of gaining power without the support of the millions of native-born, working farmers." In short, in Pepper's view the

potentially revolutionary condition was emerging in crisis-riven agriculture, not in the trade union movement, thus his seemingly obsessive drive to construct a class (i.e. Communist-led) mass Farmer-Labor political organization.

[\*\*"Letter to the Workers Party of America on the Establishment of an English-Language Daily from Grigorii Zinoviev, Chairman of the Communist International in Moscow."\*\*](#) [publ. Jan. 21, 1924] Congratulatory letter from the head of the Communist International to the newly established English-language daily newspaper of the Workers Party of America, *The Daily Worker*. Zinoviev likens the fundraising efforts of the American Party to help establish *The Daily Worker* (the establishment of which also was funded by a large conditional grant by The Comintern) to the fundraising process undertaken by Lenin and the Bolsheviks at the time of the establishment of Iskra. In a line pregnant with implications for the policy of the Pepper-Ruthenberg faction, Zinoviev states that "Whoever wants to help the Communist Party to become, not a guild organization which defends only the narrow class interests of the working class, but a party of proletarian revolution, of Socialist upheaval, of the hegemony of the working class, must, after the establishment of a party of workers, direct its attention also to the winning over of the farmers.... The chief difference between the Russian Bolsheviks and Mensheviks could, in the final analysis, be brought down to the question of the farmers." (Not surprisingly, Pepper directly quoted from this letter in a theoretical article in the party press even before the letter was published!) Zinoviev additionally sets a task for the future agenda of the WPA: "At the first opportunity the American comrades must establish a special mass Communist newspaper designed for hundreds and hundreds and thousands of small farmers."

[\*\*"Defense Audit Shows Deficit Hampers Work: Ruthenberg Appeal is Big New Task."\*\*](#) (*Daily Worker*) [Jan. 23, 1924] The Labor Defense Committee (LDC) was the second legal defense of the American Communist movement, established to raise bail and defense funds and to generate public sympathy for those arrested at the ill-fated August 1922 convention of the underground CPA held amidst the sand dunes of Bridgman, Michigan. This Daily Worker article notes that after 15 months of existence the LDC's fundraising was failing to keep pace with expenses, with a deficit showing of nearly \$5,000, despite more than \$110,000 previously raised. The vast majority of these funds, \$75,000 in all, had gone into legal fees and expenses defending the cases of William Z. Foster and C.E. Ruthenberg. The 32 "staunch fighters of the working class" in legal trouble in connection with the Bridgman Convention had been saved from prison thus far, but more funds were urgently needed for the appeal of the conviction of Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg, the article notes.

[\*\*"Lenin: An Open Letter to William Z. Foster,"\*\*](#) by Scott Nearing [Jan. 28, 1924]. This document, first published on May 10, 1924 in the pages of *The Daily Worker*, is provocative left wing critique of the tactics being followed by the Workers Party of America and its trade union arm, the TUEL. Nearing states that in contrast to Foster, he did not believe there was a widespread revolutionary ferment among rank and file American workers which was being impeded by a reactionary union officialdom. To the contrary, Nearing states that the rank and file had been lined up in defense of the capitalist order by "the most complete system of propaganda, lies, diversions, amusements, excitements, and thrills that the world has ever

produced." Public schools, newspapers, and movies had been employed with success "to put their interpretation on events, to suppress information, or to deliberately misrepresent the facts," in Nearing's view. Further, those American workers who did tend to believe in radical change tended to be European immigrants; "the native born American who believes in fundamental change is the exception and not the rule." Thus, outside of certain hotbeds like Butte, Seattle, New York, and Chicago, the revolutionary movement was minuscule and ineffectual. This perspective of the ideology of the American working class had important tactical implications, Nearing strenuously argued: education needed to be conducted, forces marshalled, decisive tests of strength avoided until such time that the battle could be actually won. For, Nearing stated, "an organization cannot stand too many defeats. Napoleon marched only once into Russia, but that once was enough to wreck his fortunes. The radical movement in the United States, following your policies, is marching toward its Moscow. When your front is sufficiently extended, and you are well cut off from your reserves, the enemy will annihilate you, as they annihilated your Steel Strike Organization five years ago." John Pepper and Foster were following a course "based on Russian experience, which is quite unfitted to cope with the situation you confront in the United States, and which you drive your party to ruin if you pursue it," Nearing warned.

## FEBRUARY

**Political Activity in Trade Unions** by William F. Dunne [Feb. 2, 1924] A brief exposition of mainstream American Trade Union ideology by Dunne, Labor Editor of *The Daily Worker*, member of the Central Executive Committee of the WPA, and factional adherent of the Foster-Cannon group. Dunne challenges the assertion made by some (including, not accidentally, John Pepper) that the American union movement had an "anti-political" tradition. Quite to the contrary, Dunne states that the American union movement had been political from its beginnings, serving as the mainstay of the Owenite movement and leading the drive for the public schools system in the country. While the union movement was ideologically confused and tended to follow the liberal candidates of the capitalist parties, this tendency toward tepid and oft-times mistaken action could in no way be characterized as "anti-political," in Dunne's view, but rather were an outgrowth of the weak legal standing of trade unions in America. With the defeat of the railway shopmen's strike by state action and the apparent failure of the policy of "rewarding friends and punishing enemies" on a national level, the stage was now set for coordinated national political action by the unions, Dunne believed. The establishment of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, as imperfect and insufficient though its program may be, thus represented a step forward for the American labor movement. In addition, the left wing of the labor movement had been won over by the slogan of "Amalgamation" and the grounds were readied for further organizational work in the unions and purely "Communist propaganda" for the first time.

**"Our Attitude Towards the Third Party," by Max Bedacht** [Feb. 2, 1924] Still smarting from a factional defeat at the 3rd National Convention of the Workers Party of America, Pepper-Ruthenberg factional partisan Max Bedacht produced this lengthy defense of the WPA's Third Party strategy. He mocks the assertion of Ludwig Lore's *NewYorker Volkszeitung*

that the new Foster faction-led Central Executive Committee represents a victory for radicalism, noting the instrumental importance of the Finnish Federation and the intellectuals of the Lore group in the win. Bedacht defends the November 1923 theses of the CEC on the Third Party, connecting the simultaneous and parallel battles of the lower middle class to free itself from big capital and the working class to free itself from the capitalist class as a whole. He challenges the idea of Lore and the anti-Third Party forces that the radical farmers' movement is inherently reactionary. To the contrary, the coming convention of the Farmer-Labor Party in St. Paul represents an opportunity for the WPA, according to Bedacht. "The Communists want a clear separation of workers and poor farmers from the Third Party, and in this way from the political leadership of the middle class," he says, with the possibility of winning the day at the convention and thereby "consolidating the workers and poor farmers...into a political united front on a class basis with a realistic class program."

**Workers' School in New York City Opens Second Term** unsigned news report in *The Daily Worker*, Feb. 5, 1924. The Workers Party of America established a workers educational school in New York City late in 1923, the director of which was Juliet Stuart Poyntz. In 1925, Poyntz would be subjected to severe criticism for this organization, part of the struggle against "Loreism," which was a tool in the factional fight. This brief news article from the pages of *The Daily Worker* lists the course content of this party school in its first days, including continuing classes on Marxism, History, Evolution, Public Speaking, and English as well as new courses in European History, History of the American Union Movement, History of the 3 Internationals (conducted by Lore), American Imperialism since 1860, and The Syndicalist Movement in Europe.

**Detroit Holds Huge Meeting in Honor of Lenin: 6,000 Workers in Big Demonstration** by Stanley Boone [Feb. 6, 1924] The January 21, 1924 death of V.I. Ul'ianov (N. Lenin) was the occasion for a great mass meeting in the largest auditorium in Detroit—which was filled to capacity with hundreds more turned away at the door. The gathering was addressed by C.E. Ruthenberg on behalf of the Workers Party of America and Dennis E. Batt, former member of the CEC of the old CPA, leader of the Proletarian Party, and editor of the organ of the Detroit Federation of Labor. Musical accompaniment was provided by Russian and Ukrainian choruses and a Finnish band, which closed the memorial meeting with "The International" and "The Funeral March."

**Long Live Leninism, Cry New Yorkers: Greatest Revolutionary Meeting Overflows Garden** by Norman Smith [Feb. 7, 1924] The January 21, 1924 death of V.I. Ul'ianov (N. Lenin) evoked unmistakable sympathy among a certain section of the New York working class. The memorial of Lenin's death provided the occasion for the first of the American Communist Party's mass meetings which packed Madison Square Garden. According to this account, published in *The Daily Worker*, some 15,000 people jammed the vast auditorium one hour before the meeting was set to commence and another 10,000 were turned away at the door—some of whom were hurriedly gathered for an auxiliary meeting held at Central Opera House. The Madison Square Garden session was chaired by Benjamin Gitlow and additionally addressed by C.E. Ruthenberg, Ludwig Lore, Moissaye Olgin (speaking in Yiddish), and

William Z. Foster. The meeting met with a large portrait of Lenin on the dias over the slogan "Lenin is Dead: Long Live Leninism!"

**A Lenin Library in America** by John Pepper [Feb. 16, 1924] Announcement by John Pepper in the pages of *The Daily Worker* that he was to edit a 10 volume selection of the works of Lenin. "The chief aim of the Lenin library is to give a complete picture of Leninism for intelligent workingmen. Lenin was not only the greatest statesman of our period, but at the same time the greatest scholar in social science. Lenin was the only Marxist who added a new story to the magnificent edifice of Marxism," Pepper states. Particularly reflective of the thinking of Pepper are the titles of two of the ten projected volumes—The Agrarian Question in America and The Working Class and the Farmers. Pepper here defines Leninism as "Marxism applied to the present imperialistic period of capitalist society." "If we want to understand Leninism it is necessary to learn to know Lenin's interpretation of the Marxist method of inquiry," Pepper says. He details the projected contents of the ten volumes of the series—only one of which ever saw print, and that in 1926, well after Pepper's removal from the American scene by the Comintern.

**"Minutes of the Central Executive Committee, WPA: Chicago, IL—Feb. 15-16, 1924."**

Minutes of the second 1924 plenum of the governing Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America. A decision of the Executive Council to purchase a Chicago building to house party headquarters and *The Daily Worker* is approved unanimously. The CEC splits bitterly over the question of the WPA's actions in the Farmer-Labor Party movement, with the Ruthenberg-Pepper minority seeking specific direction to build a "class" Farmer-Labor Party independent from the Third Party (LaFollette) movement, with a mandatory call for a May 30th convention—with or without the participation of outside forces. A thesis by Foster (not included in the minutes) is instead adopted by the majority, which results in the minority declaring that it will immediately appeal to the Communist International for resolution of the matter. Foster, Cannon, Pepper, and Ruthenberg are decided to be immediately dispatched to Moscow to argue the merits of the case before ECCI; Hathaway and Halonen (Foster faction); Bedacht and Manley (Pepper-Ruthenberg faction) are named to the CEC as substituted during the departure of the four leaders, and Alexander Bittelman is elected Acting Secretary of the WPA in Ruthenberg's absence. James Cannon resigns the largely ceremonial post of Chairman; since the post is listed in the constitution, a motion to eliminate it is ruled out of order and William Z. Foster is elected to the position by a vote of 9 to 3 (Ruthenberg voting with the majority group). Bill Dunne is elected a co-equal co-editor of *The Daily Worker* to join the current (minority faction) editor, J. Louis Engdahl—this vote like others dividing 8 to 5 along factional lines. Procedure for accepting the anticipated application for membership of Scott Nearing and other "controversial" figures is discussed.

**Thesis on the Present Situation in Relation to Our Labor Party Policy, Feb. 15, 1924,** Submitted by C.E. Ruthenberg and John Pepper This thesis was prepared by Ruthenberg and Pepper for the February plenum of the Central Executive Committee, held in Chicago on Feb. 15-16, 1924.

William Z. Foster prepared a similar document regarding Labor Party tactics and there was some effort made to combine the two documents in a subcommittee, which seems to have vetoed by Pepper, who did not see the documents as reconcilable.

**Thesis on the Present Situation in Relation to Our Labor Party Policy, Feb. 15, 1924,”**

Submitted by C.E. Ruthenberg and John Pepper This thesis was prepared by Ruthenberg and Pepper for the February plenum of the Central Executive Committee, held in Chicago on Feb. 15-16, 1924. William Z. Foster prepared a similar document regarding Labor Party tactics and there was some effort made to combine the two documents in a subcommittee, which seems to have vetoed by Pepper, who did not see the documents as reconcilable. As a result, this thesis was voted down by a vote along straight factional lines, 8-5, and the Foster thesis approved by the same margin. The Pepper-Ruthenberg faction declared shortly thereafter that it would appeal this matter to Moscow and plans were set in motion which would send William Z. Foster (Majority), John Pepper (Minority), and M.J. Ogin (Anti-Third Party Group) to Moscow to plead their cases about six weeks later. This definite statement of the Minority's Labor Party thinking indicates a strong concern over the WPA losing "the influence which it has gained through its Labor Party policy during the past year." With a July 4, 1924 convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action in the offing and the WPA certain to be locked out of the proceedings by the "bitterly hostile" railroad brotherhoods sure to dominate the CPPA gathering, unless some dramatic step was taken by the WPA in the interim, the organization would be isolated from the dynamic Labor Party movement, which had been injected with new dynamism by the rise of a Labour Party government in England and the discrediting of the old parties by the eruption of the Teapot Dome oil bribery scandal. A June 30 counter-convention was called for by the Ruthenberg-Pepper thesis, to "crystallize" the elements over which the WPA had influence and give the WPA a sturdy basis for negotiation with the anticipated CPPA-based Third Party. "As the representatives of an organized group of a half-million to a million workers, our Party cannot be ignored. It will be a powerful factor which must be considered by the leaders of the Cleveland Convention," Ruthenberg and Pepper declare.

**"Report of the Directors and Financial Statement Submitted to Second Annual Meeting of Stockholders of the Russian-American Industrial Corporation, Feb. 26, 1924."**

From the end of 1922 onward, solicitation of funds for Soviet Russia in the United States moved from an orientation of "aid to starving Russia" to one of "technical assistance for Russian industrial development." One of the primary institutions for this sort of fundraising was the Russian-American Industrial Corporation (RAIC), an organization largely backed by the energy and assets of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America. The RAIC entered into a financial partnership with the state-owned textile manufacturing trusts of Moscow, Petrograd, and Kazan, which combined to form the All-Russian Clothing Syndicate, in which RAIC invested its funds. The organization sought to capitalize itself to the tune of \$1 million with the sale of \$10 shares of stock. This is the text of the report of the Directors of the RAIC (including Sidney Hillman and Joseph Schlossberg) to shareholders, detailing the operations of the organization in 1923. A balance sheet detailing assets and liabilities is also provided.

**MARCH**

**“Conflict in the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party”** [circa March 1924]. A fascinating document from the Comintern archives apparently prepared as a backgrounder for the Comintern, which was asked to mediate a factional dispute about the line of the Workers Party with regard to the Farmer-Labor Party movement and to electoral participation in the 1924 Presidential campaign. The document seems to have been prepared by a partisan of the Foster-Cannon faction and subsequently edited by a member of the Ruthenberg-Pepper faction and is written in relatively neutral terms. The division of the leadership of the Workers Party between the “trade unionist” Chicago faction and the CEC’s New York majority “antedates the formation of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party on July 3, but found militant expression after that date,” according to this document. The intricacies of the Farmer-Labor Party policy are explored in depth, including the strategies behind various 1924 convention dates as an intricate ballet between semi-antagonistic trade unions, state farmer-labor parties, the old Farmer-Labor Party, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, sundry liberals, the LaFollette movement, and the Workers and Socialist parties took place. An outstanding backgrounder to the trends of thought within the WPA during the 1923-24 period.

**Statement of Party Activities: A document prepared by William Z. Foster and unanimously adopted by the CEC of the WPA, March 18, 1924.** Originally a four page summary of WPA activities, written by Foster and approved unanimously by the CEC after minor amendment at its March 17-18, 1924 plenum. Foster states that the differences in the WPA over “education, organization, and Party strategy” are the result of a failure of the CEC to establish a “clear-cut, well balanced program for the schooling, building, and functioning of our organization.” The statement puts primacy on detailing WPA educational work and makes six specific recommendations: (1) Selection of a national Educational Director; (2) founding of “Lenin College,” a central school for Party workers; (3) establishment of classes in various cities, organized in circuits and covered by professional teachers; (4) extensive tours for lecturers on theoretical subjects; (5) publication of popular theoretical pamphlets and books; and (6) periodic discussions at branch meetings of current events and decisions of the CEC on Party policy. With regards to WPA organization, the statement is unequivocal: “The Party organization must be gradually and systematically transformed from its present territorial basis to that of shop and factory units.” The statement advocates a blend of education and organizational attention to avoid the dual disasters of sectarianism and organizational sterility which are said to result from exaggerated attention towards one or the other of these objectives.

**Letter from the WPA CEC Majority to ECCI Requesting the Recall of John Pepper, March 27, 1924.** The Fosterite majority of the CEC of the Workers Party of America addressed this communication to the Executive Committee of the Comintern requesting the recall of John Pepper from the United States. The group of 7 indicated that this subject had come up at the 3rd Convention and that 37 out of the 52 delegates gathered had approved the CEC making this request. William Z. Foster was authorized to state the case for the group while he was in Moscow seeking the Comintern’s support for their program for the WPA with respect to the Farmer-Labor Party. This statement was signed by William Z. Foster, James P. Cannon, Fahle Burman, Earl Browder, Bill Dunne, Alex Bittelman, and Martin Abern.

## APRIL

**"Theses on the Workers Party Policy in the Elections of 1924: Presented by the Anti-Third Party Group, circa April 1924,"** by Moissaye J. Olgm The March 17-18, 1924 meeting of the Central Executive Committee dispatched three leading factional figures to Moscow to argue the merits of their programs for the Workers Party of America with respect to a formation of an American Labor Party. William Z. Foster represented the majority faction, John Pepper represented the minority, and M.J. Olgm represented the New York-based "Third Faction" (which was personified by Ludwig Lore on the party CEC). This is a document which Olgm prepared for the consideration of the Executive Committee of the Communist International explicitly detailing the ideas of the "Third Faction"—which was known as the "Anti-Third Party Group" in the nomenclature of the day. While Lore and Olgm in this period have long been regarded as committed "2-1/2 Internationalists," this document does confirm the analysis made by Ruthenberg that the "Third Faction" criticized WPA policy from the Left. No support could be given to a third bourgeois party and no United Front campaign run with it, Olgm argues, as such a policy would smack of the sort of political machinations for which the "old parties" were held in contempt by the working class. Instead, the forthcoming June 17 convention should be utilized for the establishment of a firm "class line" "Labor-Farmer Party" which would run campaigns in opposition not only to the Republicans and Democrats, but also in opposition to the forthcoming "third bourgeois party" which was then seemingly being born through the auspices of the Conference for Progressive Political Action at its scheduled July 4 convention. "Only a clear-cut party of labor and exploited farmers, controlled by organized labor and farmers, acting through representatives of workers and farmers, and nominating its own candidates on a definite class program of labor and exploited farmers, can dispel the mistrust of the labor masses, destroy their political inertia and make them fight capitalism through political weapons with at least the same determination as they have hitherto fought capitalism with the weapons of strike and boycott," Olgm argues.

**"Letter to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow from Max Bedacht in Chicago."** [circa April 1924] A passionate defense of John Pepper by his alternate on the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party. Bedacht states that while he and Jim Cannon were in Moscow arguing before the Comintern for the legalization of the American Communist Party, the issue was "solved finally by the tactfulness of Comrade Pepper. He not only solved the problem of 'liquidation,' but he also lead the party out of the cave of fruitless scholastic discussions onto the field of political action." Unfortunately, rather than support the new unity in the Party, Bedacht says that Cannon immediately began to cobble together a new factional group to win majority control of the Central Executive Committee. "In spite of the changed situation he never for a moment stopped considering the elimination of the old opposition as a desirable goal. Apparently he saw in this opposition not only the handicap of yesterday but also the stumbling block of tomorrow when opportunist plans were to be carried out," says Bedacht, noting that the New Majority of the CEC elected at the 3rd Convention [Dec. 30, 1923-Jan. 2, 1924] was the ultimate result of Cannon's factional shenanigans. The "New Majority" was an amalgam of the quasi-Social Democratic Right of the party, represented by Ludwig Lore of the New York Volkszeitung, along with the Fosterite "Industrialists," called "Nur-Gewerkschaftler" [Trade Union-Exclusivists] by Bedacht. Foster, "the leader of the present majority [of the CEC] and thus the leader of the party has never yet, in his two years activity in the party, written a political article, nor has he delivered a political speech. The circulus viciosis of his thoughts are the trade unions and the conquest of them,"

Bedacht charges. The New Majority targeted John Pepper since he was “the best, clearest, and ablest of the minority.” Unable to eliminate him due to Pepper’s widespread support, a “fable of Pepper the factionalist was invented” so that the CI would eliminate Pepper on behalf of the “opportunists and Nur-Gewerkschaftler,” Bedacht says.

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**“Objective Conditions and Shop Nuclei,”** by Harry Gannes [April 5, 1924]. The year 1924 saw a strong campaign for a restructuring of the structural model of the American Communist movement from one based on primary units established on a territorial basis and subdivided among branches speaking one common language to a model based on primary units in each workplace, without regard to language. These “shop nuclei” were adopted from form of organization used by the Bolshevik Party in pre-revolutionary Russia and were believed to be of fundamental importance in enabling the vanguard party to “reach” the masses of non-party workers with its message. Harry Gannes calls the current party model an “antiquated organizational structure that has prevented it from reaching the very section of the working class that must be relied upon as the motive force of revolution.” Capitalism inevitably leads to large, concentrated production units, he argues, many of which are non-unionized, necessitating the formation of party nuclei as the main vehicle for reaching these workers. Gannes cites census statistics in an effort to prove that objective conditions in America are ripe for adoption of the shop nuclei model, that its industry is highly concentrated. He argues that language organization would retain its importance under the new system due to the natural accumulation of certain nationalities in specific trades.

**“Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg and the WPA Organization Committee in Chicago from John J. Ballam, DO4 [Buffalo], April 14, 1924.”** Citing family difficulties over which he has no control, newly appointed WPA Buffalo District Organizer John Ballam resigns his post with this April 14, 1924 letter to the WPA’s Organization Committee. At the same time, Ballam insists upon his consideration for the post as DO for the powerful Boston District. “You have not a better comrade for the job and you KNOW it,” Ballam insists. The arch-factionalist Ballam, a former leader of the Central Caucus faction, may well have elicited mirth and chortling when he asserts “I have been accused of ‘factionalism’ but you cannot point out a single instance wherein I have acted against the discipline and interests of our party when I accepted its general policy.” He graciously adds that “When I disagree with the party’s tactics the CEC will be the FIRST to know of it.”

**“Recommendations to the American Commission,” submitted by William Z. Foster and James P. Cannon** [circa April 15, 1924] > Set of 13 theses presented by leaders of the Majority faction of the Workers Party of America, William Z. Foster and James P. Cannon. This document demonstrates that there was support on the ground for the “Bolshevization” of the WPA by moving from a territorial and language-based form of organization to one based upon shop nuclei – a switch which would have enormous impact upon the membership size and ethnic composition of the WPA after implementation of the scheme in 1925. Foster and Cannon call for the bringing of the entire party press under direct ownership and control – a move which

would similarly have a dramatic impact on the party when actually implemented in 1930-31. The Majority faction calls for formal condemnation of the notion of the Pepper Minority that there was a direct path of transformation on the horizon to convert a future “Left Wing Labor Party” into a “mass Communist Party,” noting that even if successful the tactic would result in the formation of dual Communist parties. Foster and Cannon also, unsurprisingly, call for a “manifold” increase in the WPA’s trade union work, including a requirement backed by party discipline for party members to join trade unions in their fields. Foster and Cannon also call for the identification and promotion of actual workers at the bench into the CEC as a means of “proletarianizing” the party – a move which would, incidentally, have shifted the balance of power away from the “New York intellectuals” of the Pepper-Ruthenberg-Lovestone faction towards the trade union-oriented Chicago faction of Foster and Cannon. A detailed call for the liquidation of factionalism is somewhat disingenuously appended.

**“Internal Party Problems: Statement of the Central Executive Committee of Workers Party of Americai.”** [April 19, 1924]. A rather testy open letter from the CEC of the WPA to the party membership criticizing the “organized opposition” to the CEC which had purportedly manifested itself at recent membership meetings held in Philadelphia and New York. These meetings had been addressed by Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg reporting on the CEC’s policies and activities and attempting to rally the rank and file behind the forthcoming June 17 Convention of the Farmer-Labor Party. His appearance had been greeted by “resolutions of the same contents and practically the same wording were introduced at both of these meetings” instructing the CEC to “combat and stamp out the opportunistic tendencies manifesting themselves” in the party and to “take action against Comrade Lore for his alleged attack upon the Comintern.” These resolutions (reflective of the perspective of the Pepper-Ruthenberg minority faction) were “of a sort which could have no other purpose than to sow doubt and suspicion in the party ranks against the CEC and thus, by indirection, to undermine its authority, crystallize opposition to its leadership, and generally demoralize the party organization,” this CEC statement charged. Final action had already been taken on the subjects of these resolutions and “the CEC feels in duty bound to insist that once a matter has been settled by the proper party authorities, and a call for action issued, the party ranks must close, and every party members must render the CEC the utmost support and cooperation.” Members were called upon to put aside their factional differences and work together for the success of the June 17 FLP Convention.

**“Organizational Problems of the Workers Party,”** by A. Bimba [April 12, 1924]. This article by Lithuanian Federationist Antonas “Anthony” Bimba criticizes the WPA for failing to coordinate its educational programs with its organizational recruiting practices at mass meetings of the organization. “Through our political activities we have created large spheres of influence in various organizations of workers. Thousands of workers are our sympathizers. They are with us and are working for our program. Ideologically they are ready for membership in the Workers Party. Now the question arises: why are they not in the Party?” he asks. Bimba cites three examples to back up his contention that the party should make more effort to turn sympathizers into party members by moving speakers on this theme earlier into the program. Particularly galling for Bimba is the mishandling of the Feb. 6, 1924 Lenin Memorial meeting at Madison Square Garden: “We had the best speakers. Comrade Foster was to make an appeal for the Workers Party. He delivered a masterful speech. But he was left last on the program, when many of the people were already leaving the hall and bout half of the audience was standing between the chairs. The speech lost its entire effect and the good appeal did not bring

the desired results." "If we want to get the workers into our Party we must change the character of the programs of our mass meetings. We must call upon them to join our ranks," Bimba declares.

**"Hail the First of May."** [leaflet of the United Toilers of America] [c. April 25, 1922] This is the text of a rare leaflet of the "Legal Political Organization" subsidiary of the Central Caucus-CPA Opposition! It seems to have been printed in Detroit! The UTA used a lot of BOLD TYPE and exclamation points in this document! They advanced many slogans! They bought them by the gross and used them all at once in the hope that one would stick! "We will refuse to allow ourselves to be killed through overwork!" they declare. "Long live the maximum eight-hour working day!" they continue. "Down with all lengthening of the working day!" they add. "We do not want to starve to death as a reward for our hard toil!" they emphasize. "Down with all wage cutting!" they implore. "Down with starvation wages!" they protest. "We will not allow the smashing of workers' organizations! We will defend the hard fought-for rights of our Unions!" they defiantly assert. "Down with the Open Shop!" they demand. They continue in a like vein! The slogans go on and on! It is difficult to understand why a spontaneous revolution did not erupt in Detroit on May 1, 1922, since there was so much BLACK TYPE, so many slogans, and so many exclamation points circulated! But somehow, the social revolution was delayed! Capitalism survived! "Long live the struggle of the workers!" they urge. "Long live the international solidarity of the proletariat!" they reiterate. "Long live the mobilization day of the revolutionary working class of the whole world— Long Live the First of May!" they reemphasize. "Long live the Proletarian revolution!" they repeat. "Long live Communism!" they conclude.

**"Minutes of the Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America: New York, April 3-27, 1922."** The governing Central Executive Committee of the Communist Party of America met an unprecedented 12 times in the month of April 1922. Key matters covered at these sessions included: discussion of pre-convention theses on the relationship of the legal and underground communist organizations (April 3); controversy in the Friends of Soviet Russia between top leaders Alfred Wagenknecht and Jacob Hartmann (April 6); discussion of the activities of the party and TUEL in the unions (April 7, 9); controversy in the Jewish Federation (April 9); discussion of the Central Caucus-CPA Opposition (April 10); an important reorganization of the CEC, in which were tendered resignations of 7 of its members and a vote taken resulting in the removal of Will Weinstone, Meyer Lunin, and Joe Zack in favor of Bob Minor, Alfred Wagenknecht, and Earl Browder (April 14, 17) and the issuance of an official statement on the same (April 24). This change was ostensibly made in the interest of party unity, an attempt to assure representation on the CEC by all major factions in the run-up to the August Bridgeman Convention. Also considered by the CEC was: convention planning (April 25); the question of industrial nuclei (April 26); appointment of a committee to visit Gene Debs in Terre Haute in an apparent attempt to win his support for the CPA (April 26); and personnel matters on the Federated Press (April 27). The efficient administrator Wagenknecht and the newly-released Ruthenberg were put in charge of reorganizing the WPA (April 27), which had up to that point been rather haplessly directed by the orators Jim Cannon and Caleb Harrison. Perhaps the single most important matter addressed during the April 1922 was the division of the CEC into 3 permanent sub-committees, on the motion of Earl Browder: an Industrial Committee of 3, and Organization Committee of 3, and a Political Committee

consisting of the remaining “resident” members (April 26). The same Chicago-based Industrial Committee was then kept (including CEC members Browder and Swabbeck and non-CEC member Bill Foster), with the other 2 sub-committees sitting in New York— Katterfeld, Stilson, and Lovestone on the Organization Committee, with the remaining 5 CEC members sitting on the Political Committee. This Chicago-Industrial / New York-Political division of the organization would prove to be the fundamental contradiction powering the party’s factional war of the 1920s.

### **[“Workers in Hancock, Michigan Organize Forces for Labor Rule; Will Go to St. Paul on June 17,”](#) by T.J. O’Flaherty [April 25, 1924].**

In April of 1924 Daily Worker staffer T.J. O’Flaherty went on a speaking tour sponsored by the Workers Party of America on behalf of the June 17 Farmer-Labor convention. This report from the little town of Hancock, Michigan, in the copper country of the state’s upper peninsula, provides an interesting bit of local color.

Hancock, the town in which the Finnish radical newspaper *Työmies* was first firmly established, would have seemed to have been a natural hotbed of WPA activity, given that fully 40% of the organization was Finnish in this period. However, O’Flaherty indicates that the 1910 Calumet strike “left a reign of terror in its wake that practically crushed every vestige of trade union organization and prevented any radical movement from lifting its head for several years.”

Though active and promising, the Hancock WPA branch consisted of just 8 members in a town and environs of 25,000 people. O’Flaherty notes that about half of his audience of 145 were of Irish extraction, their interest piqued by the denunciations of him by the local Catholic priest.

“The curses of the priest had no effect on those sturdy trade unionists, and every copy of *The Irish People* offered for sale at the meeting was disposed of,” O’Flaherty notes.

### **[“Speech to the American Commission of ECCI: Moscow – April 29, 1924,” by William Z. Foster](#)**

Gargantuan 10,000 word speech made to a special American Commission held in Moscow in connection with the 4th Enlarged Plenum of ECCI. Foster responds at length to the previous speech of Moissaye Olgin (made in German), an advocate of disassociation of the Workers Party of America from further machinations around the emerging “Third Party” perking around the potential Presidential candidacy of Sen. Robert LaFollette. Foster’s presentation clarifies one of the least precise elements of Theodore Draper’s second book, details of the political struggle and the factional situation around the Farmer-Labor Party, the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, the Conference for Progressive Political Action, and the potential “Third Party” of 1924. In short: 1. The Pepper-Ruthenberg-Lovestone and Foster-Cannon factions seem to have been largely united around the idea of entering the Third Party movement in order to finesse a split of its proletarian rank-and-file from its “petty bourgeois” leadership. 2. The battle over convention dates was not an aspect of this factional fight, but rather an effort to navigate around a potential LaFollette candidacy. The Communists wanted to go early (May 30) in order to name a labor candidate such as Bill Dunne ahead of a scheduled Republican Party convention and its anticipated split of the LaFollette “progressives,” while the Minnesota Farmer-Labor Party with which the WPA had made alliance wanted to go late (July 4) so as to join and bolster the anticipated LaFollette boom. The date June 17 was selected as a compromise to avoid a premature split that would have isolated the Communists. 3. Objections to the Third Party tactic revolved around the perceived lack of size and discipline of the Communist movement to enter and effectively control such a Third Party movement as well as that movement’s orientation to farmers rather than workers. 4. Foster’s perspective as to the

possibility of the Third Party movement winning state power and the chances of the Third Party tactic actually generating a mass Communist Party is more or less realistic – it was all a long shot. Foster is not married to the idea that the FFLP-supported June 17 Convention will necessarily be more radical than the CPPA-supported July 4 Convention, arguing that the former might be swamped by a sudden and massive entry of LaFollette forces, which he regards as antithetical to the party's mission.

### **[“Party Principles and Discipline: A Letter Authorized by the Central Executive Committee Directing the Reinstatement of an Expelled Comrade,”](#) by C.E. Ruthenberg**

[April 29, 1924]. Letter of Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg on behalf of the Central Executive Committee of the WPA to the English Branch of Local Portland [OR], published for the edification of the party in the pages of *The Daily Worker*. This letter nominally deals with the case of Otto Newman, ordering his reinstatement to the English Branch after being expelled in March 1924 for violating party discipline by accentuating the necessity of force in the socialist revolution at a public meeting. Beyond this, the document serves as a very useful and explicit official published statement of the position of the American Communist movement on the role of force in the transition from capitalism to socialism. Ruthenberg writes: “We cannot as a Communist Party hide our views on this question from the working masses. We must, where the issue is raised, frankly present our viewpoint. We cannot stultify ourselves because of the pressure of the capitalist state power.... Our Party does not advocate the use of force by the workers today. The whole strength of our Party is being given to the campaign to build a mass political party, that is a Farmer-Labor Party, through which the workers and farmers will enter into the political struggle against the capitalist ruling parties.... Does this mean that we believe that the workers and farmers of this country will through such a Farmer-Labor Party elect their representatives to public office and then win control of the governmental power and proceed by legislative action of the parliamentary institutions of the capitalist government to the abolition of the Capitalist System? Such a viewpoint is an illusion.... No privileged class in past history has given up its privileged position upon the demand of the exploited class without resorting to force to maintain its privileged position...” Ruthenberg cites the recent experience of Russia, Hungary, and Bavaria as evidence that the final conflict “takes the form of a struggle between a capitalist parliamentary government and the Soviets which are the expression of the workers’ government.”

## **MAY**

### **[“St. Paul — June 17th,”](#) by James P. Cannon. [May 1924]**

An article from the monthly magazine of the Trade Union Educational League lauding the forthcoming June 17th Convention of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, scheduled for St. Paul, MN. The St. Paul gathering was held in parallel with a July 4, 1924 convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action, scheduled for Cleveland, which the Socialist Party was not incidentally attempting to steer in the same direction that the Workers Party was attempting to take the FFLP. Cannon’s article attempts to explain this dualism. The CPPA’s “sympathy” for the idea of a labor party is a disguise to hide their actual allegiance to the capitalist parties,” he states, adding that the CPPA labor leaders are unable to form a working class party “because they do not have a working class point of view. They do not live like the workers and they do not think like the workers.” Only the St. Paul convention offered a forum for the participation of the militant working class rank and file, Cannon asserts.

### **"Speech to the American Commission of ECCI: Moscow – May 6, 1924," by William Z. Foster**

Thirty minute speech by de facto Workers Party leader William Z. Foster to the American Commission of ECCI held in advance of the 5th World Congress of the Communist International. Although in agreement on tactics of the WPA towards projected Third Party Movement of Robert M. LaFollette, there is plenty of room for bad blood and factional polemics in this reply to the speech of John Pepper. Foster denies that he is a syndicalist, reemphasizes his belief that party work in the trade unions is underemphasized, and denies Pepper's charge that Foster's intent is to forge an alliance with the trade union bureaucracy of the AF of L. He also scoffs at Pepper's attempt to associate him with the semi-social democratic views of *Newyorker Volkszeitung editor Ludwig Lore*. Foster attacks the central idea of Pepper's "August Theses" of 1923 that a left wing Farmer-Labor Party can be created and transformed into a mass Communist Party. The failure of the united front policy in Chicago, ending in the split of John Fitzpatrick of the Chicago Federation of Labor from the Federated Farmer-Labor Party was not the fault of the Chicago-based Foster faction since the CEC was completely apprised and completely supportive of every tactic pursued, Foster says. Indeed, Foster says he was opposed to the break with Fitzpatrick, as "largely a manufactured split." "We split with one group of so-called progressive trade unionists to go into another group just as bad, if not worse," Foster declares. Foster does continue to hold out hope that the Farmer-Labor movement can be put into action against the Gompers bureaucracy, however. He cautions that ECCI "must be very careful before you give us a program of splitting the June 17th Convention with a left split. If you do, the Communist Party of America is going to be thrown back, is going to be detached from the masses, and its work is going to be greatly hampered, not for a few months, as Olgin says, but for a long time to come."

***Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America from Peter Hansen and Cornelia Davis in Buffalo, NY, May 6, 1924.*** In March of 1924, John J. Ballam was appointed District Organizer of WPA District 4, based in Buffalo, New York. He soon thereafter received a 2 month stipend of \$150 a month for organizational expenses of the district office and had earned the enmity of the previous District Organizer, Peter Hansen. This is a letter by Hansen to the CEC denouncing the activities of Ballam in Buffalo, charging a failure to keep records, a failure to hold District Executive Committee meetings, a failure to provide financial records to party members in the district, a failure to keep an orderly office, and factional machinations worthy of a machine politician. "He came here with a grouch on against the CEC, and he took it out on those nearest to his hand," Hansen writes. "This man Ballam should not be permitted to come into continuous contact with the rank and file membership of the Party as an organizer. He lacks judgment and common sense. Whatever his abilities in other directions may be, his character is such as to constitute him a menace to the organization in his present capacity. Those who have seen him at work (?) and have not been deceived by his preposterous airs of self-importance, are disillusioned in regard to the leadership of the Party.... His unspeakable pettiness, his malicious, relentless, and cowardly persecution of those who have incurred his dislike, his shameless lying and slandering and falsifying of facts have earned him the contempt of comrades here who asked nothing better than to serve the Party and to be let alone." Includes a very lengthy footnote by Tim Davenport detailing this particular episode in the Buffalo soap opera.

### **"Speech to the American Commission of ECCI: Moscow – May 7, 1924," by Karlis E. Janson**

This contribution to the debate on the political situation in the Workers Party of America at the American Commission of ECCI was made by one of the key founding figures of the American Communist movement, the Latvian-born revolutionary Karlis Janson, better known by his Americanized name "Charley Johnson." This document is an esoteric contribution to Janson's biography, including: 1. Janson's background in America as having been employed for about 15 years as skilled worker in the (Boston) shipyards. 2. The Profintern functionary Janson's obvious antipathy to Jozsef Pogany/John Pepper. 3. Janson's having been moved from work as one of three members of the "American Agency" of the Comintern to work helping to establish the fledgling Communist Party of Canada. Janson challenges the commonly-held notion that the highly paid "labor aristocracy" were American-born, noting from his own experience that skill and education was related to salary and that in the shipyards such workers were apt to be Germans or Latvians rather than American-born. Janson argues that certain unions, such as the Machinists and the Garment Workers, were reachable by the Communist Party and he advocates a strict Labor Party orientation in the United States and Canada rather than an attempt to cobble together a Farmer-Labor alliance.

### **Communists Absorb Selves: 'Lefts' Pick Still Another Alias In Drive to Pack St. Paul Convention.**

[May 24, 1924] This unsigned news report from the pages of the New York Socialist Party weekly *The New Leader* illustrates the depth of antipathy felt towards the Communist movement by the majority of the Socialist Party in the run up to the Farmer-Labor Party conventions of the summer of 1924. The lead mockingly notes that "A new 'Labor Party' consisting of Communists united with Communists and consolidated, federated, amalgamated, and joined with Communists, was launched here Sunday when a group of Communists met, declared themselves the 'United Farmer-Labor Party of New York State'" and describes the refusal of the Schenectady Trades Assembly to send delegates to the gathering, which was ultimately attended by 92 people. "So far as is known, did not have a single delegate from a bona fide Labor organization," the report indicates, sarcastically adding that among the 16 members of the executive of the new organization "are such well known American 'trade unionists' as Ludwig Lore, Harry M. Winitsky, Juliet Stuart Poyntz, William Weinstone, [Charles] Krumbein, Noah London, [J.] Jampolsky, and [Benjamin] Lifshitz."

### **Open Letter to the National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party from the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America.**

[May 14, 1924]. As the pivotal St. Paul Farmer-Labor Party Convention of June 17, 1924 drew near, the political rhetoric about the gathering intensified. This open letter to the governing National Executive Committee of the Socialist Party called upon that organization to "immediately sever its connection with and repudiate" the competing July 4th Convention of the Conference for Progressive Political Action. Contrary to the expressed desires of the Socialists, the CPPA would not yield an independent labor party, the open letter declared. "Even [if] the CPPA through some miracle were to enter into the political arena as a political party standing for independent political action, what kind of party would come out of the CPPA?... Its leadership belongs to the aristocracy of labor. The LaFollette group in Congress which it supports is not the representative of workers and farmers but of small business men, professional groups—the petty bourgeoisie. Out of the CPPA there could only come a petty bourgeois Third Party, never a Farmer-Labor Party standing for the class interests of the exploited workers and farmers."

The CEC of the Workers Party's open letter declared that "If the Socialist Party wishes to retain any vestige of a right to call itself a workers' political organization, it will give heed to this demand. Today it is an enemy of the movement for growing class action of farmers and workers through its support of the CPPA, which denies and opposes such class action and by its policy stands as an obstacle to the development of a great mass movement of workers and farmers..."

**Foster's Reply to Nearing: An Open Letter in *The Daily Worker***, by William Z. Foster [May 17, 1924]. Extensive reply of Workers Party National Chairman and TUEL head William Z. Foster to the Jan. 28, 1924 open letter of Scott Nearing, which was published in the May 10 issue of *The Daily Worker*. Foster is scornful of Nearing's assertion that the overwhelming majority of the American working class are fully supportive of the established capitalist order, having been trained into such by pulpit, press, and movies and won over by material goods in the present and the hope for better things in the future. Foster declares to Nearing that "your analysis of social conditions is faulty, your facts are inaccurate, and your conclusions are wrong" and proceeds to deconstruct Nearing's arguments point by point. "The weakness of your whole conception is that it is based upon the false assumption that there is no considerable mass revolutionary sentiment in this country," Foster declares, noting that even though formless and barely conscious, popular dissatisfaction was widespread and revolutionary in essence: "It is the raw stuff of which revolutions are made. Revolutions are not brought about by the type of clear-sighted revolutionists that you have in mind, but by stupid masses who are goaded to desperate revolt by the pressure of social conditions, and who are led by straight-thinking revolutionaries who are able to direct the storm intelligently against capitalism." Failure to commit the Workers Party and the Trade Union Educational League to active participation in the daily struggles of the workers would mean consigning the Communist organization to the sterility: "Your conception that the conscious elements are the only revolutionary force leads straight to the isolation of our movement and to its degeneration into a studious, sterile, cloistered Communist sect," Foster scolds. Instead, "the left wing must have a balanced program with education, organization, and action going hand in hand."

**"Speech to the American Commission of the Communist International,"** by William Z. Foster [May 6, 1924] In this speech to the American Commission of ECCI, Bill Foster replies to charges levied by his arch-nemesis, the Hungarian Communist leader John Pepper. Foster states that the majority faction which he lead was not overdoing work with the trade union movement, and that he himself was not a syndicalist, nor was his faction either syndicalist or opportunist. To the contrary, Foster calls the agriculturally-oriented policy of the minority "the worst sort of opportunism that the entire foundation of our party could support." Foster distances himself from the idea of transforming the Federated Farmer-Labor Party into a so-called "Communist mass party," which he characterizes as an ideal not only opportunist, but dangerous because it was an attempt to create a dual movement to the already existing WPA. The United Front for a labor party existed in Chicago for a year and "the contact which the Workers Party gained from this concerted action was of enormous value," according to Foster. Foster states that the errors of his faction in placating Fitzpatrick & Co. in Chicago were not his alone, as the policy was enthusiastically supported by the entire CEC, which was at the time controlled by the Pepper group. Foster says that he was against the split with the Fitzpatrick labor party forces in Chicago in favor of the Minnesota-based FLP because "when we broke

with the Chicago group, we lost contact with the trade unionists and when we allied ourselves with the Minnesota group we established contact with the farmers. Our United Front in Minnesota is a untied front with the farmers; our United Front in Chicago was a unite front with the industrial workers." Foster interestingly notes a desire to play a long-shot and attempt to recruit Gene Debs tot the FFLP as its 1924 Presidential standard-bearer: "We hope that it would be possible to find in Debs the candidate of the proposed FFLP. Should we be successful in getting Debs as a candidate, then we could make a split in the June 17 convention which would place us in a position to get together a large enough group from this convention to build a Farmer-Labor Party." This was, admittedly, unlikely. Foster notes: "We were the champions of the Labor Party idea. We split the Farmer-Labor congress in Chicago, and this split, in my eyes, hurt the Party. If we now carry through this second split, it will hurt our Party still more. For this is a much more important congress than the congress in Chicago and its influence is far greater." A split was therefore to be avoided, and if such a policy was adopted for the American party by the CI, "then the Communist Party of America will be hurled backwards upon its path, it will be isolated from the masses and its work will be very much hampered —and not only for a few months, as Olgin said, but for a long time"

**"Our Policy in the Farmer-Labor Party: A Letter to a Group of Finnish Comrades,"** by C.E. Ruthenberg [May 7, 1924]. An open letter from WPA Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg to a group of Minnesota Finnish party members who wrote a letter to the CEC questioning the decision to run explicitly Communist candidates to contest races in the Minnesota FLP primaries. The Minnesota group clearly saw this as a violation of the spirit of the United Front and a strategy that was leading to the marginalization of the WPA by alienating non-Communist members of the FLP. To this argument Ruthenberg responds that "our instructions were, in effect, that while we remain part of the FLP, while we loyally support the FLP in its struggle against the capitalist parties, within the FLP we carry on a struggle to win the workers and farmers for our program of a proletarian revolution, the Soviets, and the Dictatorship of the Proletariat." While doing this is certain to fan the flames of antipathy with a segment of the FLP, Ruthenberg declares that "in place of becoming frightened because we find ourselves in conflict with certain progressives, we should welcome this conflict as the best indication and proof that we are following a Communist policy." Evidence of the shaky relationship between the WPA and the FLP prior to the debacle of July 1924.

**"A May Day in Prison,"** by Joseph M. Coldwell [May 8, 1924]. Brief autobiographical snippet of May Day behind bars in Atlanta Federal Penitentiary by Coldwell, a Socialist Party activist who became a founding member of the Communist Labor Party in 1919. Coldwell began serving his sentence later that year, imprisoned by the Woodrow Wilson regime for making the "seditious" public declaration that "war is organized murder." Coldwell writes in a heartfelt manner about a simple May Day celebration held by the handful of political prisoners at Atlanta, a group which included Russian Jewish emigre anarchists, members of the IWW, and Eugene V. Debs. The group gathered by the tuberculosis quarantine area, one of their number drew an artistic "banner" in the sand, and the group sang revolutionary songs, accompanied by a violin. A nice little word picture about May Day behind bars. Includes a biographical footnote on Coldwell and a rare 1922 Workers Party of America leaflet bearing his photograph.

**Double the Party Membership!**, by C.E. Ruthenberg [May 20, 1924]. Despite a process of steady growth during the first 30 months of its existence, the Workers Party of America was in a state of chronic organizational disarray, as indicated by this article by Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg in *The Daily Worker*. Only 8 of 15 District Organizers had compiled and filed their organizational reports for March 1924, Ruthenberg complains, and even in the districts which filed, only about half of the branches had filed their reports with the DO, resulting in an incomplete report. These reports showed a chronic tendency of many WPA members to pay their monthly dues in a timely manner—Ruthenberg presents figures showing that over 36% of the members of those branches which did report stood from 1 to 3 months in arrears. As a result of this organizational dysfunction, the CEC decided to immediately establish new three person “Membership Committees” of particularly serious and trusted comrades in every branch, City Central Committee, and District Committee. These Membership Committees were to be dedicated to enforcement of dues collections, organization of “persistant campaigns” to attract new members, and the assignment of concrete tasks to each party member. The new “Membership Committees” were to serve as de facto Organizational Committees for each party unit—a major and system-wide reconstruction of the WPA’s network of territorial branches. Ruthenberg expresses the belief that with the establishment of these new Membership Committees, the WPA would stand at 25,000 dues-paying members within two months’ time. (An interesting aside: the paid monthly membership of the WPA fell from about 17,400 in April 1924 to fewer than 15,000 during May and June, before recovering somewhat to 16,200 in July 1924.)

**“LaFollette and the Communists: The Statement of Robert LaFollette on Communist Participation in the Progressive Movement, May 26, 1924.”** An open letter from the time of Sen. LaFollette’s independent campaign for President of the United States decrying Communist participation in the Farmer-Labor-Progressive movement. LaFollette, whose campaign was supported by the Socialist Party to the extent they did not run their own candidate in 1924, here calls the Communists the “mortal enemies of the Progressive movement and democratic ideals” and declares that “all Progressives should refuse to participate in any movement which makes common cause with any Communist organization” meaning the forthcoming June 17, 1924, Farmer-Labor Party Convention to be held in St. Paul, MN.

## JUNE

**June 17th After LaFollette**, by C.E. Ruthenberg [June 6, 1924] Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America C.E. Ruthenberg attempts to put on a happy face following a body blow delivered to the chances of formation of a mass united front Farmer-Labor Party on May 26 by presumed Presidential nominee Sen. Robert M. LaFollette. In the wake of LaFollette’s denunciation of the Workers Party-supported June 17th Farmer-Labor Party Convention, all attention was paid by many of the Senator’s supporters to a rival July 4th Convention. Chances of combined action were thus cut off at the knees. Ruthenberg contends that the grapes were sour anyway, that the Communists knew full well that the liberal supporters of LaFollette would have to be separated from the organization at some stage of the process and that LaFollette had actually done the forthcoming organization a service, having managed “to strip away from it all those elements which have no place in it.” Thus the road was cleared for establishment of

an authentic “class” Farmer-Labor Party, Ruthenberg indicates. Ruthenberg optimistically claims that the forthcoming Farmer-Labor Party convention would have delegates which represented “a half-million to a million organized workers and farmers.”

**Circular Letter to All Delegates of the June 17th St. Paul Convention from C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America, June 10, 1924.** Brief circular letter instructing Workers Party delegates to the June 17th Farmer-Labor Party Convention to attend a pre-convention caucus at St. Paul’s Ryan Hotel. “It is very important that there be a preliminary conference of the Party members who are delegates, so that they can be thoroughly familiarized with the Party policies at the Party Convention. It is essential that you attend this conference and you are instructed to do so,” the communique reads.

## JULY

**“Leading the World Revolution,”** by Alexander Bittelman. [July 1924] Summary of the activity of the recently completed 5th Congress of the Comintern by a participant, a factional ally of William Z. Foster. Bittelman states that the Comintern is a “one international party of Communism with disciplined sections in every corner of the world.” The decisions of its international congresses are “law,” Bittelman says, and that between congresses the Executive Committee of the CI “has unlimited authority and power over the policies and actions of each affiliated organization. In Communist ranks, there is no questioning its sphere of competency or the extent of its directing power. Its word is law, to be taken as given, and carried out with the maximum of efficiency.” Despite central direction, the communist movement is anything but a mass of “blind soldiers,” Bittelman says, as there is “nothing more foreign” to the spirit of the party than “blind unquestioning obedience.” Bittelman also remarks on the emergence of the new term “Leninism,” accepting its merit (“a good name”) and loosely defining it as the combination of Lenin’s “method” and his “certain approach” to handling revolutionary problems.

**“Socialists Make Sure Suicide is Successful,”** by J. Louis Engdahl [July 26, 1924] &8212; Former top Socialist Party editor turned *Daily Worker* chief Louis Engdahl tees off on his former comrades in this 1924 election editorial comment. Engdahl notes the NEC of the Socialist Party&8217;s first endorsement of the principle of political fusion, calling for withholding of naming a Socialist candidate “when the candidate of another party has the official endorsement and approval of the Conference for Progressive Political Action.” This Engdahl likens to political suicide, forcing Socialists to endorse petty bourgeois reformers such as Fiorello LaGuardia and Robert M. LaFollette. The Socialists will be forced from the field by this tactic all across the country, Engdahl argues, reduced to “only one congressional district in the land, that now represented by Victor L. Berger in Congress” in which the Socialists might be said to possess “that ephemeral thing called &8216;The Chance of Election.&8217;” “Bi-chloride of mercury or potassium cyanide are not more deadly to human life than this policy will be upon the flickering political life of what remains of the Socialist Party,” Engdahl declares. Only the Communist candidates William Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow represent a chance of safeguarding “the class interests of the workers and farmers,” Engdahl contends.

### **"Foster Reports Tour Thru East is Big Success: Members Enthusiastic About New Policies." (*Daily Worker*)** [July 28, 1924]

&8212; Major shifts both of the program and the organizational form of the Workers Party of America were driven by the Comintern in the summer of 1924. Attempts to establish a “class-based Farmer-Labor Party” were abandoned in favor of a Communist campaign in the Workers Party&8217;s own name, while the former geographic and language federation-based form of organization was to be largely scrapped in favor of primary party units based in individual factories. Top party leaders William Z. Foster and C.E. Ruthenberg were dispatched to party centers throughout the Northeast to explain these changes to the membership. This report in the *Daily Worker* quotes William Z. Foster extensively as to the results of this informational tour. Foster characterizes the rank and file membership of the WPA as strongly supportive of these changes, with great interest expressed by the large membership meetings at which he and Ruthenberg spoke. Confusion seems to have been expressed over whether the move to running its own candidates signaled an end to united front tactics as well as the meaning of the new shop-based form of party organization. Foster utters famous last words proclaiming “the complete liquidation of factionalism” in the ranks of the membership, with the unanimous policy of the Central Executive Committee accepted by all factional groups. This marked “a period of growing strength and consolidation of the Workers Party,” Foster believed.

**“Workers and Farmers on the Mark,”** by C.E. Ruthenberg. [July 1924] An account of the June 17-19, 1924, Convention of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party, held in St. Paul, MN, written by the head of the Workers Party of America. The convention, dominated by the WPA, was attended by over 500 delegates, who drew up a program and nominated candidates for President and Vice President of the United States (Duncan McDonald of Illinois and William Bouck of Washington, respectively). The body also elected a National Committee, which in turn elected a National Executive Committee, which included Alex Howat of Kansas as Chairman and Clarence Hathaway of Minnesota as Secretary.

**Statement of Personal History**, by John August Miller [circa July 1924], This is a brief set of autobiographical events scrawled on a single piece of paper by a Latvian Federationist seeking admission to the Workers Party of America. A fascinating set of bare bones details, including membership in the SPA’s Latvian Federation from 1907 to 1917, return to Russia after the February Revolution, membership in the Russian Communist Party before the October Revolultion, helping to found the Crimean Bolshevik movement, 11 months in an Indian prison after being arrested at the border, a return to America in 1921, and joining the Central Caucus faction in the split of 1921-22—of which he says he remained a member until January of 1924 [!!!]. What a great memoir this fellow could have written... Valuable as further evidence that there remained an underground “Communist Party of America” composed of Central Caucus faction irreconcilables (based in the Latvian Federation) at least into 1924. Miller was accepted into the WPA by action of the Organizational Committee on Aug. 5, 1924.

### **“Letter to the Central Executive Committee, Workers Party of America in Chicago**

**from M. Hansen, Secretary of English Branch—Seattle, WPA, July 17, 1924.**" The July 10, 1924 decision of the National Executive Committee of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party (controlled by 5 WPA members of the 7 member body) to abruptly terminate the candidacies of Duncan MacDonald for President and William Bouck for Vice President came "as a bolt from the blue" to rank and file supporters of an anti-LaFollette "real Farmer-Labor Party." This letter from the Seattle English Branch to the center demands an explanation, as the reasons for the abrupt shift advanced in *The Daily Worker* are said to have "lacked sincerity." Hansen, the Branch Secretary, writes: "There is in Washington a considerable sentiment for a political organization so rooted in the economic life of the organized producers as to be permanent and enduring, and especially is this true of the delegates who attended the Convention, and who were so favorably impressed with the attitude of our Party. They had been convinced thoroughly that they did not want LaFollette, which to them meant the death of their hopes for a real F-L Party. Neither did they hold any hope for reaching any considerable number of the masses through the WP direct. They were enthusiastically behind the candidacy of the men named in the Convention, and the withdrawal leaves them out on a limb with our organization in the position of sawing it off next to the trunk."

**"Letter to M. Hansen, Secretary, English Branch - Seattle, WPA, from James P. Cannon, Assistant Executive Secondary, WPA, July 22, 1924."** Reply of the Central Executive Committee to the July 17, 1924 letter addressed to them by English Branch—Seattle seeking complete and accurate information as to the WPA's rapid change of course with regard to the Presidential campaign of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party. Cannon replies that the reports in *The Daily Worker* were, in fact, accurate and that the WPA determined that despite its best efforts to create a United Front Farmer-Labor Party, this project was unsuccessful. The two non-WPA members of the FFLP National Executive Committee and a large section of the FFLP's supporters were in the process of going over to the mass independent campaign of Senator Robert LaFollette. Cannon states that after through discussion, "the conclusion we finally arrived at, on the basis of the facts staring us in the face, was that the Farmer-Labor United Front in the present campaign does not exist, with the possible exception of two or three states such as Minnesota, Montana, and Washington." Rather than running a watered-down Farmer-Labor Party campaign, around which there was no mass support, Cannon states that the Communists were duty bound to run a campaign under their own banner, and thus Foster and Gitlow were named as candidates, to run a campaign "on a clearly defined revolutionary basis." "Communists have to approach all these problems from the standpoint of the Communist Party, which is identical with the immediate and ultimate interests of the working class and which is the only Party that stands for these interests.," Cannon says, adding that the comrades of Local Seattle should talk frankly with "such well-informed leaders of the Farmer-Labor movement as John Kennedy and William Bouck" about the reasoning behind the WPA's decision.

**"Workers Told to Rally for Foster-Gitlow: Ex-Socialist Secretary Repudiates LaFollette."** (*Daily Worker*) [July 24, 1924] This rather astonishing discovery from the pages of *The Daily Worker* illustrates the depth of dissatisfaction with the rightward turn of the Socialist Party in the middle 1920s. Former National Executive Secretary of the SPA Walter Lanfersiek – remembered to history as the embodiment of the party's conservative wing – contributes a letter to the Workers Party daily challenging workers to "beware your betrayers, your Hillquits, your Bergers, and the

rest" and to instead "march one step nearer the Revolution" by voting for the WPA ticket of William Z. Foster and Benjamin Gitlow in November 1924. The Socialists' presidential choice, Robert LaFollette, is characterized as a consistent petty bourgeois, from whom it would be "idiocy" to expect help in advancing the socialist agenda. Those supporting him when other working class options exist Lanfersiek calls "traitors, conscious or unconscious." The former SPA Executive Secretary declare that "until another and a better standard is furnished us by the march of events, the Russian Revolution must be our guide and hope."

"["New Party Industrial Registration,"](#) by James P. Cannon [July 25, 1924]

Under the slogan of "Bolshevization," the 5th World Congress of the Communist International of 1924 instructed affiliated parties to reorganize on the basis of the workplace rather than according to geographical locations. In this article from the Daily Worker, Assistant Executive Secretary of the Workers Party of America announces a new "industrial registration" of the entire party membership to pave the way for this fundamental shift. The registration, slated to begin August 1, 1924 and to be completed by the end of the month, was to supplant a similar "partially successful" registration conducted in the fall of 1923. According to Cannon the new survey of members and their workplaces was needed before the WPA could "even take one step" in the direction of reorganization on a shop basis. "In order to gauge the strength of the party, to measure its ability to carry out a given task, to estimate its forces in relation to the forces of its enemies in the labor movement, the Party must know who its members are, where they work, what organizations they belong to, etc., " Cannon asserts, adding that "without this information, the Party is stumbling in the dark."

## AUGUST

[Letter to George Bloxam in Spokane, WA, from John C. Kennedy in Seattle, WA, August 6, 1924.](#)

Evidence of the damage done to the WPA's United Front effort in their 1924 Farmer-Labor Party debacle. John C. Kennedy, head of the Washington state Farmer-Labor Party and previously a close ally of the Workers Party's effort to construct a radical mass national Farmer-Labor Party writes to Spokane WPA member Bloxam: "The action of the Workers Party in putting its own candidates in the field and then having its members of the National Executive Committee [of the FLP] disregard the plain intent and desire of the St. Paul Convention [June 17, 1924] and withdraw McDonald and Bouck and in their place endorse the Workers Party candidates, has made it impossible for the Farmer-Labor Party of this state to continue its cooperation with the national Workers Party." The Washington FLP voted to follow the mass movement in endorsing the LaFollette-Wheeler Presidential ticket and to put their own full slate of candidates into the field as well. "Unquestionably the LaFollette movement is the most spontaneous movement of the producers along independent political lines for fifty years. We feel it is our duty to participate in this movement, rather than to stay outside hurling futile criticism at the masses who are beginning to move in the right direction, even though they don't see clearly their final goal," Kennedy notes.

## SEPTEMBER

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, WPA, in Chicago from Norman Tallentire, WPA District 12 Organizer in Seattle, Sept. 19, 1924."** While historians of the American Communist movement are aware of the importance of the party's "District Organizers" in the abstract, there is surprisingly little in the literature detailing the actual job functions of those individuals. This report to the center by Norman H. Tallentire is particularly valuable in this regard. Tallentire, formerly a District Organizer in D9 [Minneapolis] who moved to D12 [Seattle] to replace outgoing DO William F. Bowman, describes the Washington and Oregon District in utter disarray—Local Portland in the midst of an expulsion binge with an organization down 70 members to "40 or 50," other Branches disbanded or out of contact with the district office, some key party members gone with remaining members demoralized. He also describes Ruthenberg's National Office as seemingly incapable of handling simple change of address information, noting a chronic tendency to mail to bad addresses in spite of all instructions otherwise, including in one case mailing to a member expelled a year previously as a suspected spy. Tallentire details an impressive list of organizational meetings conducted or planned in his first month and notes the meeting of a Washington state convention and reorganization of the District Executive Committee. Tallentire outlines plans for the organization of new Locals in Washington, pleads with the center for accurate district financial records, and asks that the forthcoming information he provides be used to update the mailing records not only of the national office, but also of TUEL, *The Liberator*, and *The Daily Worker*. He is sharply critical of the recent Federated Farmer-Labor Party fiasco, in which the FFLP's campaign for President and Vice President was arbitrarily terminated by WPA decision, an event which Tallentire characterizes as a "grave error" which alienated and embittered the WPA's closest non-party allies in Washington state.

**"Lenin: The Great Strategist of the Class War, by A. Lozovsky; Translated with introduction by Alexander Bittelman."** [Sept. 1924] Full text of a pamphlet published in September 1924 as no. 14 of the Labor Herald Library by the Trade Union Educational League. Part of the campaign to formulate and detail the new concept "Leninism," which in the introduction Bittelman defines as "the theory and practice of working class struggle. It is the accumulated experience of the battling armies of the proletariat against capitalism reflected by the mind of a genius." The main body of the pamphlet is written by A. Lozovsky, head of the Red International of Labor Unions (Profintern). Lozovsky characterizes Lenin as self-critical, realistic, an uncompromising enemy of reformism, an original revolutionary theorist, an astute political statesman, a committed internationalist, and a skilled mass organizer. "Lenin was one of those men by whom humanity marks its historical path, concerning whom legends are being told in his lifetime, and the farther we go from the date of his death the clearer will stand before us Lenin's greatness and immortality," Lozovsky enthusiastically states.

**Letter to Nick Dozenberg, Accounting Department, Workers Party of America in Chicago, from Robert Minor in Chicago, Sept. 20, 1924.**

**Short internal communication to one of the paymasters of the impoverished Workers Party of America from cartoonist-turned-magazine editor Bob Minor, begging for some payment for Maurice Becker for his artistic work done on behalf of *The Liberator*. Becker had "stood by us at a time when the other cartoonists had nearly all deserted, and who furthermore has been patient and uncomplaining of the long**

**months of failure to pay him,” Minor notes, but he now found himself “dead broke” and needing at least some of the \$78 owed him. Minor emphasizes Becker’s enthusiasm and uncomplaining nature in contributing cartoons to both *The Liberator* and *The Daily Worker*.**

## OCTOBER

**“The Death of the Socialist Party,” by J. Louis Engdahl [October 1924]. A final sneer at the Socialist Party from the 1924 campaign. Former editor of the Socialist Party’s official organ Engdahl argues that the SP’s immersion in the campaign of progressive Republican Robert LaFollette for President of the United States spells the final deathknell for the SPA: “When the Socialist Party deserted the ‘Labor Party’ fight, turned its back on class action, and joined the LaFollette straddle of the two old parties of Wall Street, its members had two choices. They could either join the Communist forces in the Workers Party, or go over into the LaFollette camp. Many did join the Communist ranks, singly and in groups. The rest are going over to the temporary LaFollette organizations that will collapse after the election day has passed.... The Socialist movement has been swallowed up in the LaFollette wave. It has been completely obliterated.”**

**“The Bolshevization of the Party,” by James P. Cannon [Oct. 5, 1924]. Speech by Jim Cannon to the Workers Party School in New York City headed by Juliet Poyntz, dealing with “Bolshevization” as the process of building theoretical homogeneity through party education as opposed to use of the phrase in terms of structural reorganization upon the shop nucleus basis. During the course of this speech Cannon makes frequent use of the newly coined term “Leninism,” and he cites the Comintern definition of this as “Marxism in the period of imperialism and the epoch of the proletarian revolution.” Cannon notes the 5th Congress of the Comintern [June-July 1924] had found every Communist Party save the Russian to be deficient in terms of lacking “the Bolshevik discipline, the iron hardness, the capacity for decisive action, the mobile form of organization, and the strong theoretical foundation which a party of Leninism must have” and had consequently launched the slogan “The Bolshevization of the Party!” The Workers School was an important component in this process for the American party, Cannon asserted, as it provided the WPA with “a fighting instrument against all deviations both to the right and to the left, and for the overcoming of the confusion of the party members” and for hammering Marxism and Leninism into the consciousness of the party in accord with the thesis of the 5th Congress of the CI.**

**Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Workers Party of America in Chicago from Antonas (“Anthony”) Bimba, Staff Member of Laisve, Brooklyn, NY. Oct. 8, 1924.**  
This unpublished letter to Executive Secretary Ruthenberg from Lithuanian-American Communist journalist Bimba is extremely interesting on two levels. First, Bimba is critical of the

tendency to issue frequent monetary appeals, in this case for *The Daily Worker*, and he claims that the constant pleading for funds is disorganizing the party. "...The membership of the party, and especially the members of various language sections, who have to support the language press, are being bled white with financial appeals. Hundreds of members stay away from the meetings just because they know that as soon as they step into the hall they will be asked to give a dollar or half a dollar for this or that purpose. Branch meetings are almost entirely taken up by discussions, fights, and arguments on the constantly flowing appeals for financial help. Our party is fast becoming only a money-getting agency," Bimba complains. Second, Bimba reveals how it was that the Communist language press was able to sustain itself, boatloads of Comintern cash not in evidence: "I made a suggestion that the comrades should establish an efficient machinery for doing outside jobs, such as printing of tickets, show cards, throwaways, leaflets, programs, etc. Then an appeal should be made to the party units and organizations under our influence that they should send their jobs to be done by *The Daily Worker*'s printing establishment.... We find from experience that this is a permanent and most important financial resource of the paper. The Lithuanian daily, as such, brings a deficit of thousands of dollars every year, but most of this deficit is being covered from the source mentioned above." Bimba states that he believes *The Daily Worker* can be made a self-sustaining publication given the size of the party organization if its job printing function is expanded. The document here includes a short biographical footnote of Antanas Bimba.

**Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Workers Party of America in Chicago from Anthony Bimba, Editor of Laisve, Brooklyn, NY, Oct. 8, 1924.** [New edition.] This letter to Executive Secretary Ruthenberg from Lithuanian-American Communist journalist Antanas "Anthony" Bimba is extremely interesting on two levels. First, Bimba is critical of the tendency to issue frequent monetary appeals, in this case for the *Daily Worker*, and he claims that the constant pleading for funds is disorganizing the party: "...The membership of the party, and especially the members of various language sections, who have to support the language press, are being bled white with financial appeals. Hundreds of members stay away from the meetings just because they know that as soon as they step into the hall they will be asked to give a dollar or half a dollar for this or that purpose. Branch meetings are almost entirely taken up by discussions, fights, and arguments on the constantly flowing appeals for financial help. Our party is fast becoming only a money-getting agency." Second, Bimba reveals how it was that the Communist language press was able to sustain itself without massive Comintern funding: "I made a suggestion that the comrades should establish an efficient machinery for doing outside jobs, such as printing of tickets, show cards, throwaways, leaflets, programs, etc. Then an appeal should be made to the party units and organizations under our influence that they should send their jobs to be done by the *Daily Worker*'s printing establishment.... We find from experience that this is a permanent and most important financial resource of the paper. The Lithuanian daily, as such, brings a deficit of thousands of dollars every year, but most of this deficit is being covered from the source mentioned above." Bimba states that he believes the *Daily Worker* can be made a self-sustaining publication given the size of the party organization if its job printing function is expanded.

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg, WPA Executive Secretary in Chicago from Alexander Trachtenberg, International Publishers in New York, Oct. 24, 1924."** While International Publishers of New York is today the official publishing arm of CPUSA, its origin was completely

independent of the Communist Party, as this October letter from IP head Alexander Trachtenberg makes clear. Trachtenberg states that IP had been in negotiations with the Labour Publish Co. of London for rights to an English edition of Franz Mehring—*s Life of Marx*, but learning the fact that the party was interested in the sale of the book through its Literature Dept. was “sufficient reason for giving up our project.” Trachtenberg states that “I would not work for a firm if it should want to injure the party in any way. Com. [A.A.] Heller, I am sure, will discontinue his financial interest in it under similar circumstances. On the contrary, we hope to be of assistance to the party. There are books which the party would like to see published (I have in mind large books) but because of lack of facilities and involved risks, it cannot undertake the task itself.”

## NOVEMBER

**“The Workers Party to the Fore,”** by William Z. Foster. [Nov. 1924] A rundown of the political situation in America by the Workers Party’s candidate for President of the United States. Foster view of the independent Presidential campaign of Sen. Robert LaFollette of Wisconsin is harsh. While acknowledging the LaFollette campaign to be the “channel into which has been turned the elemental mass movement of disillusioned workers and farmers,” Foster argues that it is in reality “the most dangerous enemy of the toiling masses of America today” due to its propagation of “the democratic illusion.” This “fake democracy” is of a “treacherous” nature, according to Foster, citing examples in Germany and England of betrayal of the working class by “middle class” movements akin to that of LaFollette in America. Foster states that “in any great struggle of the workers that may arise when the LaFollette movement comes to power, the governmental powers will here also be turned against the workers or turned over to the Fascist elements in the United States.”

**“Torchbearers,”** by Moritz J. Loeb [Nov. 1924] This article from the WPA’s *Workers Monthly* marks the first anniversary of *The Daily Worker*, said to have been started through the “collection” of less than \$75,000 of a \$100,000 target. The party had used the funds to purchase a printing plant in Chicago, used to produce not only its English daily and the monthly magazine, but also the Italian daily, *The Young Worker*, *The Young Comrade*, and the various pamphlets and leaflets issued by the organization. “Upon our press depends the rapidity and the healthiness of the growth of our party. Upon the quality of our press depends the education of our membership, the “bolshevizing” of our Party, the making of Communists out of Communist Party members,” Loeb declares. Problems remained, Loeb indicates, including small circulation size, the absence of paid advertising, and financial deficits. Loeb calls for the employment of every WPA member as a “cog in the machine” of a distribution mechanism commensurate with the new party printing plant.

**“Report from William Z. Foster in Chicago to A. Lozovsky in Moscow, November 7, 1924.”** This is an interesting report from the leading figure in the Workers Party of America in 1924, recent Presidential candidate and majority factional leader William Z. Foster, to the head of the Red International of Labor Unions, A. Lozovsky, in Moscow. Foster reports on the changed conditions which the WPA faced in the aftermath of the 1924 electoral debacle. The Trade Union Educational League, trade union arm of the WPA which Foster headed, was now isolated from active elements in the American working class, due in the first place to an active

assault on TUEL members in the unions on the part of the conservative trade union bureaucracy. However, Foster notes, "this tendency toward isolation was greatly increased by the Farmer-Labor split in Chicago, which separated large numbers of sympathizers from the League. But the worst blow of all came with the development of the LaFollette movement. This cut off many of the most valuable sympathizing elements we had in the unions." He added that the WPA's main slogan, "For a Farmer-Labor Party" was a "dead slogan" that was due to be abandoned, except for the fact that the WPA was "divided on this question, the Ruthenberg minority still clinging to the idea of propagating the Farmer-Labor Party slogan, in face of the fact that there is no mass movement for it." TUEL was in a weakened position, the circulation of its official organ had plummeted to 5,000 copies a month, and in Nov. 1924 the magazine was combined as an economy measure, along with The Liberator and Soviet Russia Pictorial to establish a new official organ of the WPA called The Workers Monthly. TUEL was conducting electoral politics within several unions, including the Miners', Carpenters', Machinists', and the smaller Amalgamated Association of Iron, Steel, and Tin Workers, but only in the last-mentioned was any limited degree of success possible, Foster declared. He additionally noted that "the securing of the backing of our own members still remains one of the greatest problems of the League," since "our foreign born workers have very little understanding about working in the trade unions."

**"Memo on Branch Membership Status in WPA Dist. 9 to Executive Secretary C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago from DO9 Clarence Hathaway in Minneapolis, Nov. 19, 1924."**

During the first 3 years of the Workers Party of America, the organization's primary component was the Finnish Socialist Federation, comprising nearly half of the organization's total membership. Nowhere was the Finnish Federation stronger, as a percentage of total membership, than in the WPA's Minneapolis District. This esoteric document from Minneapolis DO Clarence Hathaway analyzing the Minneapolis district branch by branch reveals a great deal about exactly what sort of partner the Finnish Federation was to the central WPA organization during the year prior to the structural reformation of the party under the moniker of "bolshevization." In branch after branch, dues collections as reported by Hathaway to have run several or many months late; dues paid frequently did not correspond to the (irregularly-filed) reports of members on the books. Dual stamps seem to have been heavily utilized, possibly bordering on abuse, by some branches. Many branches had failed to complete their required industrial registration paperwork (matching up members with the unions and shops they were part of) or were otherwise unresponsive to the communications of the District Organizer. Hathaway's document is not a picture of a disciplined and organized party—rather the opposite. In short, scholars may well need to examine this document and completely rethink the previous depiction of the "bolshevization" reorganization of 1925 in the literature. So-called "bolshevization" may well have been less an externally-determined and blindly-enforced diktat from abroad than a policy which spoke to rectifying festering conditions of disorganization, with lack of effective transmission belts between center and the branches and a tendency towards rampant "social" Federation membership rather than truly committed participation in the WPA organization.

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**"Letter to the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America in Chicago from Benjamin Gitlow in Chicago, November 21, 1924."** This short letter from Benjamin Gitlow to the governing CEC (of which he was a member) indicates the very real limitations of party discipline and the ability of the CEC to elicit compliance to its decisions. Gitlow absolutely refuses to accept a position as the head of the Broad Silk Weavers' Union, citing the impending collapse of the Paterson Silk Strike – the conduct of which Gitlow says was discrediting the union. "Anyone who will take over the situation will have to shoulder the burden of all the discredit," he states, in noting that his "appointment at this time to that position is only a move to remove me as a CEC member from an important district prior to a convention." Instead, he once again applies for the post of Industrial Organizer for the Eastern District, a job for which he believed himself to be well qualified, but one to which the CEC has stubbornly refused to assign him, ostensibly for factional reasons.

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago from Rose Pastor Stokes in New York."** [Nov. 22, 1924] Upon receiving Jeannette Pearl's Nov. 10 complaint against Rose Pastor Stokes, Executive Secretary of the WPA C.E. Ruthenberg drafted a letter to the accused, passing along the specifics of Pearl's complaint. This brought the following answer from Stokes: "I have little to state. As you know, certain circumstances have fired in me the profound suspicion that Comrade Pearl is not square with the party. In a few instances I have voiced this suspicion to a trusted comrade... Since the time I spoke with you about my lack of confidence in Comrade Pearl nothing has happened to weaken or uproot that suspicion." Stokes adds her perplexity at why Pearl would attack Stokes living arrangement with her Right Social Democrat husband Graham, stating that Pearl knew "I live at my home, but not with Mr. Stokes, nor have been for many years." Rose Stokes adds that "Mr. Stokes' principles and mine, as well as our conduct in the class struggle, are diametrically opposed, as the world knows. I am responsible to the

party and to the working class only for my own, and not for his, conduct." She tells Ruthenberg that she awaits further instructions.

### **"Letter to Rose Pastor Stokes in New York from C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago."** [Nov.

25, 1924] In this letter, WPA Executive Secretary Ruthenberg answers Rose Pastor Stokes' letter of Nov. 22. Ruthenberg states that "Of course I was familiar with the fact that you had these views in regard to Comrade Pearl and I presume other comrades have the same knowledge, but the issue at the present time is not whether your views were communicated to various comrades in responsible positions, but whether you made a public statement charging Comrade Pearl with being a spy." He adds that "it is inadvisable for us to have any such public statements made in our Party circles unless you are able to make definite charges and prove these charges, and from my knowledge of the facts in the case, I do not think that there is any proof which warrants such charges being submitted." Ruthenberg states that Pearl had been under surveillance by the party in this connection and that "continued observance of Comrade Pearl's activity for a period of time completely dissipated any suspicions which might have been directed against her. Under these circumstances to cast anew suspicions by publicly bringing such a matter into the Party is against the best interests of the Party and is an injury to Comrade Pearl." Ruthenberg asks Stokes to prepare a statement detailing exactly when made public allegations against Pearl and what she had specifically said.

### **"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg in Chicago from Rose Pastor Stokes in New York."** [Nov.

28, 1924] Rose Stokes replies to C.E. Ruthenberg's letter of Nov. 25, stating that if Jeannette Pearl's allegations are to be taken literally then "I doubt if they have any basis in fact. To the best of my recollection I have at no time 'publicly declared' that Jeannette Pearl 'is a spy.' It is, of course, not impossible to forget; but, to my mind, it is highly improbable that I'd fail to remember such a "public declaration statement" had I made it." Stokes states that she assumes the CEC will hear both sides of the story before passing judgment. The punch line to this exchange: in 1925 Rose Pastor Stokes obtained her divorce from Graham Stokes and for a time shared an apartment with the former Mrs. Louis Fraina, Jean Pearl. Rose Stokes later married her party comrade Israel Romaine (better known by his pen name, "V.J. Jerome") but Pearl and Stokes remained close personal friends for the rest of Stokes' life. Rose Pastor Stokes died of cancer in June of 1933 at the age of 53.

## **DECEMBER**

### **"Circular Letter to the Finnish Branches and Members of the Workers Party of America from Fahle Burman in Chicago, Dec. 4, 1924."**

The Finnish Language Section of the Workers Party of America was far and away the largest division of the organization during the first years of its existence. Secretary of the Fnnish Federation was Fahle Burman, a member of the WPA's 13 member Central Executive Committee, a loyal factional adherent of the Foster-Cannon majority group. This circular letter from Burman to the membership of the Finnish Federation offers a fascinating new perspective on the WPA's factional war. Burman urges Finnish Federation members to fully participate in the delegate-election process to the

forthcoming convention and to thus exert their full influence on the Party's political line and the composition its leading strata. The CEC had decided to join the spontaneously emerging Third Party movement "for the purpose of imbuing it, if possible, with a class character," Burman says, a policy to which the Comintern had given its consent. The Foster-Cannon group initially did not take much interest in this policy, confirming the question in principle, but commenting upon "the erroneousness of the tactics which were to guide us in the control of said movement, as the tactics were mainly based on the endeavor to get mechanical control" of the young Farmer-Labor Party movement—a top-down conception, Burman states. By way of contrast, The Foster-Cannon group believed "that members of trade unions and other workers' organizations have to be educated in the class spirit and must be encouraged to act independently of other classes, which is tantamount to building up the Party from the bottom." The logic of the Pepper-Ruthenberg Farmer-Labor Party policy would be the establishment of a parallel political organization, with the WPA reduced to a guiding "party of Communist theorists." Burman alludes that the pursuit of this policy would effectively mean a renewal of the parallel Legal WPA/Underground CPA organizations—a conception which was extremely unpopular among the members of the Finnish Federation. With the failure of the Federated Farmer-Labor Party to emerge as an authentic mass organization and with the Comintern vetoing collaboration with LaFollette, "the majority of the Committee were all but convinced that in the event of LaFollette declaring his candidature at the time of the [CPPA] Cleveland Congress on July 4th, there would be nothing left for us but to abandon the Farmer-Labor Party altogether and to appoint candidates from the Workers Party."

**"Letter to C.E. Ruthenberg, Executive Secretary, Workers Party of America, in Chicago from Norman H. Tallentire, WPA District 12 Organizer in Seattle, Dec. 13, 1924."**

This brief note from Seattle DO12 Tallentire to the center documents the continued existence of an organized irreconcilable holdovers of the 1921-22 Central Caucus Faction as late as the end of 1924. A Latvian named Gus Pudnich is said to have come up to Seattle from San Francisco and was conducting agitation against the Workers Party of America in the Lithuanian and Latvian communities, attempting to "get them to organize in the pure underground 'Communist Party.'" Tallentire seeks multiple copies of the WPA's Latvian, Lithuanian, and Estonian papers for a month to more effectively "offset the propaganda that these people are putting up when they represent themselves as being the American section of the Communist International."

**"Message from the Central Executive Committee of the Workers Party of America in Chicago to the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow re:**

***Leon Trotsky's Book 1917 and the New York Volkszeitung.*** [circa Dec. 20, 1924]

Several main contenders for the leadership of Soviet Russia in the year after the death of V.I. Lenin rushed to validate their intellectual credentials through the publication of collected works by the State Publishing House. Leon Trotsky added accelerant to the factional fires with the addition of a polemic introduction, "Lessons of October," to the third volume of his *Sochinenia*, entitled 1917. This short document illustrates the nature of the international campaign the "old guard" leadership of the Russian Communist Party and their acolytes around the world to squelch the "deviation of Comrade Trotsky and his followers" through prohibition of the American Communist press from publishing from the book serially or in excerpt. As part of the American factional war, Pepper Faction pugilist Jay Lovestone falsely accused Ludwig Lore's

Newyorker Volkszeitung of having violated the proscription against publishing from 1917. This message to ECCI from the CEC of the Workers Party clarifies the error – it was not 1917 being published serially in the New York Communist German daily, but rather a translation of Trotsky's book *O Lenine*. This work, the CEC contends to a no doubt approving audience in Moscow, was “in many respects as objectionable from the point of view of Leninism as is the book 1917.” The CEC promises a “systematic ideological campaign of education of our membership” as the “best antidote to Trotskyism and other opportunist deviations from Comintern policy.”

**“Additional Instructions for the Party’s Membership Meetings.”** (Daily Worker) [Dec. 26, 1924] Anticipating the 4th convention of the organization in the first months of 1925, the Workers Party of America at the end of 1924 initiated a series of open “membership meetings” to debate the future course of the party, centered around the so-called (Foster-Cannon) “majority” and (Pepper-Ruthenberg) “minority” theses on the farmer-labor party tactic. This document reprints from the pages of The Daily Worker “additional instructions” for the conduct of these meetings, which were anticipated to be bitterly fought. The official representatives of the CEC were to be held responsible for the “proper organization and conduct” of the 10 scheduled meetings, to be held in the party’s district centers of the East and Midwest—New York, Chicago, Boston, Philadelphia, Cleveland, Buffalo, Minneapolis, Detroit, Pittsburgh, and New Haven. So that balloting on the various theses was fair and legitimate, an even number of “majority” and “minority” tellers to count votes were to be appointed. Factional plurality verging on a two-party system is implied in these and other instructions issued in conjunction with the 1924 membership meetings.

**“What the Communist International Thinks of the Different Groups in the Party,”** by Jay Lovestone [Dec. 26, 1924] Jay Lovestone has long had the reputation of having been a particularly unprincipled and vicious faction fighter on behalf of the Pepper-Lovestone “minority” faction of the Workers Party of America. This article from the Dec. 1924-Jan. 1925 “discussion” of tactics gives currency to that allegation. The Pepper-Ruthenberg faction is characterized as the “Marxian” section of the Workers Party; the Foster-Cannon faction as “superficial, empiric, non-Marxian” group dominated by a primitive trade union consciousness and the Lore group as a “Left Social Democratic group” on the “extreme Right of our party.” Lovestone seasons his charges with liberal quotations from Comintern leader Karl Radek and additionally attempts to validate his perspective of the Fosterites by quoting chapter and verse from Iosif Stalin’s Foundations of Leninism. Lovestone spends the most ammunition on Ludwig Lore in a clear effort to split the governing Foster-Cannon-Lore-Finnish Federation majority of the CEC. Foster’s alliance with Lore is characterized as an “inestimable danger” to the party and a flagrant violation of Comintern wishes to remove Lore from a place in party governance. Lovestone’s critique of the Foster group is ironic in retrospect in view of Lovestone’s future development as the leading exponent of so-called “American exceptionalism.” Lovestone charges that Foster & Co. followed bourgeois economists in seeing an economic boom of American capitalism following the election of Calvin Coolidge and seeking to delay until a more timely moment a political offensive against capitalism. Lovestone charges that for Foster and his co-thinkers “industrial activity and mobilization for the same were an end in itself.” To this he contrasts the well-rounded and balanced perspective of the “Marxian” faction headed by Comrade Pepper.

### **Membership Series by District for the Workers Party of America. 'Dues Actually Paid'**

**—January to December 1924.** Official 1924 data set of the Workers Party of America, compiled from a document in the Comintern Archive. This document shows a average paid WPA membership for 1924 of 17,378. Of these, nearly one-fifth were in D2 [New York], while the "Agricultural District" of New York averaged just 95 paid members. Note is made that D10 [St. Louis] (consisting of Southern IL, and the states of KS, MO, and NE) was merged into D8 [Chicago] effective July 1, 1924.

### **Membership Series by Language Federation for the Workers Party of America. 'Dues Actually Paid'**

**—January to December 1924** Official 1924 data set of the Workers Party of America, compiled from a document in the Comintern Archive. This shows a continued numerical dominance of the Workers Party of America by its Finnish-language federation, averaging a paid membership of 7100 (41% of the entire organization) for the year 1924. Impressive growth is shown by the Yiddish-language ("Jewish") federation, which moved to the third largest language group in the WPA in 1924. The English branches comprised the second largest language group in the WPA, but still remained just 11% of the overall organization. The South Slavic federation (predominately Slovenian and Croation) was the 4th largest language group in the WPA, topping the Russian, Lithuanian, and Ukrainian federations.

### **Initiation Stamps Sold by District for the Workers Party of America. January to December 1924.**

Official 1924 data set of the Workers Party of America, compiled from a document in the Comintern Archive. This series shows a total of 8,456 dues stamps sold (which incidentally calculates to a "churn rate" of just 5.4% for the year—but this is a case of Garbage In-Garbage Out, as initiation fees were clearly not collected from all new members of the WPA). Initiation stamp sales peaked at 2,667 in the first quarter before tailing off to average a shade over 1,900 per quarter for the rest of the year. New York and Chicago showed the largest sale of initiation stamps in absolute terms, while D5 [Pittsburgh] showed the strongest performance of any district expressed as a percentage of membership size, racking up 1091 initiation stamps for a district averaging a paid membership of 1212 for the year. One possible implication of this observation is that the enormous sale of "English" initiations in 1924 may in some way have been related to work among the Pennsylvania miners.

### **Initiation Stamps Sold by Federation for the Workers Party of America. January to December 1924.**

Official 1924 data set of the Workers Party of America, compiled from a document in the Comintern Archive. An extremely interesting monthly series in which two unexplained anomalies are apparent: (1) The failure of at least 8 of the WPA's 18 language sections to make more than a token effort to collect the \$1 initiation fee and obvious similar behavior (to lesser degree) among branches of other language groups; (2) A preposterously large sale of 5,264 initiation stamps to "English" branches, which averaged a paid membership of just 1909 over the course of the year. Either there was a revolving door in the English branches that was entirely dissimilar to the situation in any other language group of the WPA; or there was some sort of effort to collect initiation fees among "English" workers without

organizational follow up; or there was some sort of strange accounting practice used by the WPA in which miscellaneous sales of initiation stamps were lumped into the “English” category (or some combination of these explanations). A perplexing question is raised, with further archival research clearly necessary.